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Vol. 15

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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

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## *The Pocketbooks Move Forward*

EDITH R. MIRRIELES<sup>1</sup>

IN THE 1937 edition of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* the definitions given for "pocketbook" read: "A small case for carrying money, papers, etc., in the pocket; sometimes a purse; hence, money; financial resources." In the edition of 1948 the *American College Dictionary* adds to these one other item: "Chiefly British, a book small enough for the pocket."

By 1948, that is, one of the notable publishing changes of the century was finding dictionary recognition, though still as "chiefly British." Public recognition had come earlier. A realistic lexicographer would already have reversed his order of definition and would have been justified in the reversal. Of the many changes in the making and buying of books during this last half-century—the deaths of long-established houses, the rise of new ones, the excessive burgeoning of the best-seller—none is likely to show itself finally of more social importance than is the advance made by the cheap paper-bound book, the pocketbook.

<sup>1</sup> Emeritus, Stanford University; an editor of the *Pacific Spectator*; author of *The Story Writer, Story Writing*, etc.

Pocketbooks were, of course, not the first of the cheap paper-bounds on the American market. Dime novels had been read under school desks and behind geographies, had lain concealed beneath mattresses, for several generations. The reading of these, though, was, in the main, a semisecret self-indulgence, almost a vice. The pocketbook brought paper covers out from under mattresses into the full sun of respectability. Beginning as reprints, they moved quickly into every field of publication. Original novels; compilations, both original and reprinted; poetry; serious books of all kinds—all could be had in pocketbook format and at prices extraordinarily small. By 1950 or even earlier, an outsider, a lay observer, could well have felt that the paper-bound book had reached its zenith. Greater sales might lie ahead as population increased, but there was no new field left to enter.

Actually, however, the outsider, after the habit of outsiders, would have been wrong. One field remained. Magazines in the mass—good, bad, and very bad lumped together—were still, across the country, outselling pocketbooks. Why

not, then, a pocketbook which should be, in fact, a magazine?

There were, of course, several "why-not's" in plain view. The number of existing magazines was enormous. Their outlets for distribution were the same as those for pocketbooks, the prices of many still lower. They were, too, of all kinds. Scarcely an occupation, a sport, even an eccentricity, to which some periodical did not cater.

Set against these discouragements, however, were a few conditions more encouraging. For a variety of reasons, not all of them entirely financial, several of the undeniably better magazines in each of several classes had died in the first half of the century and had not been replaced. Had their readers, then, died with them? Complaints against the deteriorated quality of periodicals (complaints voiced oftenest in the columns of little magazines and quarterlies) suggested that some remained who felt themselves to have known better reading days. Other complaints came, and in even more profusion, from writers. Even the better of the existing magazines, so these ran, had mistaken the function of a magazine. They now emulated the newspaper columnist, filling their pages with accounts of passing happenings and letting literature go by the board. In such literature as they did offer, they depended too heavily on established patterns, on established reputations, turning cold shoulders on the new. Like the one-time fighting liberals of Arnold Bennett's *Milestones*, the one-time liberal and adventurous periodicals of the twenties had hardened into conservatism. . . . In 1952 two of the very large pocketbook publishing firms found room on their lists for a pocket magazine.

The first copy of *New World Writing: An Important Cross Section of Current*

*Literature and Criticism* appeared in April, 1952.<sup>2</sup> Externally, there was nothing to distinguish it from other pocketbooks unless perhaps a cover more conservative than many. It was not necessarily distinguished, either, by its subtitle. Collections of current writings were already plentiful in pocketbook format. Most of these, it is true, devoted their pages to one form—oftenest, the short story—but not all did so. What gave the appearance of *New World Writing* its importance, what made it perhaps a signpost pointing toward a new byroad for American publishing, was neither its format nor its content but the announcement made in the first paragraph of its Preface.

The editors of The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., . . . owe an explanation to friends in the literary profession and in the book publishing industry, as well as to readers generally, for this unique volume. It is intended to be more than just the sprightly anthology which, at first glance, it may appear to be. It is a Mentor Book. It is also a "little magazine."

When the first number of *New World Writing* appeared, the word "unique" was justified. It did not remain so for long. *New World Writing* having made its entrance in April, *Discovery* was announced a month later—though it did not reach the stands until 1953.<sup>3</sup> These two, plus one later comer now discontinued, *The Avon Book of Modern Writing*,<sup>4</sup> are, as yet, the chief examples of their kind.

In their first issues both *Discovery* and *New World Writing* included forewords (and *New World Writing* a "postword"), each giving the reasons for its appearance

<sup>2</sup> *New World Writing*, a Mentor Book, published by the New American Library of World Literature, New York. 50 cents.

<sup>3</sup> *Discovery*, a Cardinal Edition, published by Pocket Books, Inc., New York. 35 cents.

<sup>4</sup> *The Avon Book of Modern Writing*, published by Avon Publications, Inc., New York. 35 cents.

and charting the course it hoped to follow. The aims of the two, with one exception, were identical; the tone of one announcement from that of the other was strikingly different.

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*The Avon Book of Modern Writing*, coming later than the others, dispensed with preface. Its purposes and its importance were asserted on its covers.

A collection of original contributions by today's leading writers. . . .

This truly excellent sampling of modern writing from both America and Europe—none of which has appeared in print before in this country—has been chosen by William Phillips and Philip Rahv, the editors of *Partisan Review*.

*New World Writing* has now had four issues, with a fifth soon to come. In all these it has kept closely to the terms of its original announcement. Its intention of expediting the flow of world literature has, in especial, been fully carried out. Twenty-seven countries are represented in the four numbers.

*Discovery*, with two issues behind it, moves to new ground. In the Preface of its third number it titles itself, not *Discovery*, the word standing alone as in the first two, but *Discovery: An American Review*. Several paragraphs of a fairly long preface are devoted to explaining the addition, the gist of the explanation being that *Discovery*, beginning with this number and from this time forward, will limit itself to the writings of American authors. One or two reservations, to be sure, leave the editors some small leeway: "Finding a piece we want, we try to assure ourselves that it is American in authorship. We don't try too hard. In general, the piece itself reveals its national origin." But the course is made plain.

*The Avon Book of Modern Writing* has had no second appearance, and none is in prospect. As a substitute for it, *Stories in the Modern Manner: From "The Partisan Review"* has made one appearance and is announced as the first of a series. The series, though, if a series it turns out to be, is unrelated to its forerunner. There are some of the same adjectives on the

cover, and it has the same editors, but there, resemblance ends. Unlike *Modern Writing*, it does not open its pages to work "none of which has appeared in print before in this country." On the contrary, all of its contents has so appeared, for all is taken from the columns of the *Partisan Review*. By this alteration, *Stories in the Modern Manner* becomes an anthology, not a magazine, and so, except for its tenuous relation to its predecessor, is out of place in this discussion.

From the standpoint of sales, pocket magazines have prospered from the first. *Discovery* names in its second issue sales figures for its first sufficient to render editors of periodicals longer established breathless with envy. Sales alone, however, are, of course, no measure of worth—as the editors of either magazine would themselves be the first to grant. Puerilities and even vulgarities, "slickness and temporizing," sell sometimes better than their betters. If the arrival of the pocket magazine is to have ever a social impact and importance approximating that of the arrival of the pocketbook, these must have their origin elsewhere than in the ledger. Such social importance may spring in part from the editors' imaginativeness in beating out new paths or from some special skill in popularizing the work of writers whose worth has heretofore outrun their profits. In largest part, however, it must come, if it comes at all, from a quite different source—from the somehow enabling of tens of thousands who have not done so before to draw from contemporary writing a stimulus which is more than a titillation. For this venture is not launched for small, sophisticated groups already at home in literature; this is a mass appeal. It must succeed largely or not at all.

To help toward success, the editors of the new periodicals have several things in their favor. One of them is implicit in the word "periodical" itself. A monthly appears each month; a weekly, each week. With the pocket magazine, time is fluid. Six months gives room to look about. If the look is not completed, six can run to seven without protest from readers, for there is no financial commitment, no agreement, or only a tentative one, of so many issues within such a time. Space restrictions are relaxed, too. The longest of the stories published thus far, William Styron's "The Long March" (*Discovery* I), covers sixty-two pages of text. For an ordinary magazine such a length pushes close to the impossible. The pocket-magazine buyer, getting for his thirty-five cents not only the story but twenty-odd items besides, is likely to feel his buy a bargain.

A third freedom, though, is the one that may be perhaps the most useful of all if preface promises are to be lived up to. Literary magazines, along with many not literary, depend for their main support on subscribers, not on newsstand sales. Their clientele is largely made up of readers who subscribe and resubscribe year after year. Editors who offend any substantial fraction of this clientele are in very bad luck indeed. "Cancel my subscription" is a rebuke to which there is no effective answer. The knowledge that there is none, no matter how deep that knowledge may be buried in editorial minds, conduces to caution. "Be not the first by whom the new is tried" is posted, though invisibly, over most editorial desks. Pocket magazines, on the other hand, have little to fear from a single lapse or even from a series of them. Readers have no subscriptions to cancel, no action to take anywhere unless that of writing indignant letters to editor or

publisher. A six-month interval between issues, too, gives time for forgetting and for the arrival of a new crop of newsstand purchasers. Nor can any pressure toward conformity come from advertisers, for no advertising is carried. In his relation to buyers, the pocket-magazine editor is possessed of a freedom shared only by the editors of the smallest of the little magazines, those labors of love where one man, with perhaps a wife or friend to help, is editor, press agent, mailing clerk, and frequently financial angel and chief contributor as well. With little magazines, the absence of outside control has not infrequently opened the way to eccentricity, to dogmatism, to the certainty that all publications but the one were out of step. Its effects here, though, cannot serve as a guide and scarcely as a warning. The little-magazine editor must have been a little out of step, a little dogmatic to begin with, or he would hardly have devoted himself to a task of which the rewards are always intangible.

What use pocket-magazine editors will make of their enlarged freedom remains to be seen. To accomplish their professed purposes, they must acquire in numbers readers whose appetites for fiction have been satisfied heretofore by a far less varied fare and one containing both more syrup and more blood. As all teachers at least know, the refining of taste is a slow business. If the editors, so far, have thrown in now and then a drop of gore—well, if they have, they have at least not used syrup, and nobody who has tried lifting the level of taste in even a small group is entitled to fail in patience with them.

One of the expressed purposes of both *New World Writing* and *Discovery* is the increasing of opportunity for new talent and for older talent inadequately recognized. This purpose they are sure to

fulfil, even if not in exactly the sense meant by the editors. Every new periodical increases the number of printed pages and so means some writing put into print which, lacking the new medium, would have gone unprinted. When two, coming at nearly the same time, add rather better than a thousand new pages yearly, the enormous group of not yet successful writers is entitled to a new look of expectancy. In the volumes at hand there is not yet much to feed that expectation. The proportion of actually new writers (the ones heretofore unpublished or published only obscurely) is about the same as in those older monthlies or weeklies which make a practice of offering special invitation to, and advertising of, authors who can be announced as "firsts." This does not, of course, reflect on the genuineness of the editors' desire to be an early aid to talent. All it does is to underline an adage originating in the theater, "Plays are written by playwrights." Change a word, and the adage still holds good. Fiction is written by fiction writers and by no other, and they are a breed of slow development. That development, however, may quite possibly be the greater, even if not the quicker, by reason of a friendly hand held out.

Writers, new or not new, whose subjects or styles lead them away from beaten tracks have already found the pocket magazines hospitable. Neither set of editors yet seems to be using his freedom to disallow that of writers by enforcing his own conception of "contemporary." Readers here profit even more than writers—or, certainly, no less. Even in some of the better periodicals, pattern has been often and easily and sometimes wearisomely discernible. Spoken though it usually is as an expression of praise, ". . . reads like a *New Yorker* story" is also a definition. And the *New Yorker* by

no means stands alone. "Do they get married at the end?" Mrs. Roby of the Hillsbridge Lunch Club makes inquiry. "If they're parted, it spoils my dinner."<sup>6</sup>

But that an editor fixes no pattern makes it no less certain that every individual writer fixes his own—his own pattern in style, which is the sum of his earlier listening and writing and reading; in substance, which is the distillation of his experience. Divergencies are wide, but of style one thing can be said which applies to the bulk of the stories in both magazines and is, indeed, the mark of their modernness. The powerful voices of the recent past—Joyce, Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Hemingway—are powerful in the fixing of style no longer. Their echoes sound in occasional passages, but they have no disciples. If any one stylistic influence is at work, it is a journalistic one. With five or six exceptions, what is said is said understandably and with forceful plainness.

States of mind make up the substance of most of the stories—states of mind, not streams of consciousness. What the state is, is shown through action quite as often as by entrance into the mind itself, but the action is of consequence not in its own right but for its impact on and revelation of character. And yet that word "character" covers too much. What is revealed is less often character than some one facet of temperament; or it is the transient emotions evoked in an individual by a situation which itself is also transient. Social criticism, not often overt, is very often implicit. And several memorable stories display mass emotions—again, a state of mind but the state of mind of a multitude.

No one reader will be pleased by all the presentations in any issue. A few are

obscure. Some exploit subjects that many readers will find repulsive. An occasional one is overloaded with detail—the bit-by-bit method of twenty years ago. The average of the whole, though, bears comparison with fiction published in the longer established literary monthlies. Some of the stories would presumably have found places in these if the authors had offered them. Offered to the quarterlies, a still larger number (length not forbidding) would have been accepted.

Whether this is to the advantage of the pocket magazines or to their heavy disadvantage remains to be seen. Neither quarterlies nor literary monthlies have so far drawn multitudes to them by reason of their fiction. If, by making such stories easily accessible, by making them cheap, by removing from them the taint of "highbrow," pocket-magazine editors can also make them the preferred reading diet of an added million or two, they will in fact have accomplished a revolution.

Fiction holds first place in the pocket magazines. Two-thirds of the pages are devoted to short stories or to excerpts from novels which are complete enough to be read as short stories. In the third remaining are essays devoted to one or another form of the arts, critical evaluations, poetry—the content of any general magazine but with one difference. The timely article—the comment on today's politics, on today's economics, or foreign affairs, or sports—is lacking.

The difference made by this omission is basic. More than any editor's statement, more than all prefaces taken together, it illuminates the field in which the pocket magazines may make their large social contribution. Subtract the timely articles from any periodical except those lurid all-story ones whose covers shout out the quality of their con-

<sup>6</sup> Edith Wharton, *Xingu* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).

tents or those which, in Max Eastman's devastating phrase, are merely "poets talking to themselves"—and, of course, to one another—and what is left is scarcely more than a pamphlet. Comparison of the title-page of a current *Atlantic* or a current *Harper's* with their title-pages of ten, still more of twenty or thirty, years ago reveals how far the shift in emphasis has gone. And, in making this shift, the magazines have not been striking out a path of their own; they are no more than followers. The trend away from imaginative writing and toward the so-called practical is everywhere. It is evidenced by the masses of how-to-do-it books pouring out from presses, by the how-to-do-it courses taking yearly a larger place in college curriculums, even by the readers adopted for grade-school children. Against this displacement of the imaginative, the two pocket magazines have taken their stand. Through instinct, feeling an approaching change in the wind? Through guesswork? Through conviction? In the result, it makes little difference. With or without conscious intention, what they are doing is making a profession of faith. By turning their backs on the "timely" article, by reintroducing the essay, by the space given to fiction and the freedom accorded its writers—in all these ways they spell out what that faith is. Whatever shortcomings are to be found in their early performance, whatever offense may be given by this or that inclusion—relatively, these are unimportant. There they stand, firm set against the tide, asserting the permanent values of the imaginative as against the temporary ones of the factual. As long as they do so stand—more power to them!

But what have pocket magazines, not as they may be but as they now are, to

offer to teachers of English? Their first offering is an intangible one—a sort of spiritual support in what for a long time has been an often beleaguered outpost. English teachers would not have committed themselves to the teaching of English if they had not been committed as well to the belief that, in the long run, literature is more important than wood-working, important as they grant wood-working to be. They have, too, a conviction not only that reading "maketh a full man" but that what is read, and especially what is read early, determines in large measure what will be an adult's emotional responses, his sympathies, and convictions—and therefore his action—throughout his life. With these convictions, they cannot fail to watch with interest and even with a certain excitement an attack leveled against Gradgrind from whatever source.

Apart from the intangible, though, there are two or three tangible helps that pocket magazines already provide. Most English instructors feel a certain pressure upon them to keep in touch with contemporary writing. In their always over-busy and frequently financially harried lives, it is a convenience to get many examples of the contemporary between the covers of one book. It is convenient, too, to pick that book up at the drug-store along with aspirin and Kleenex and to pay for it less than the price of *Atlantic* and a third of that of *Perspectives*. It is better than merely a convenience that what his pocket magazine gives him is not the product of a single cult. What he gets is directed by editors' taste, of course—all published material must be—but it is not bound by the tenets of the New Criticism, now not so new, not inclined as yet to any one set of writers. The materials presented differ enough,

and there is enough of each kind, to allow a reader room to pin his expectations to this writer and to reject that one, and so be critic in his own right.

A teacher who deals with literature, however, rarely reads for himself alone. If not directly, then indirectly, his reading finds its way into his teaching. Whether, apart from this indirect approach, the pocket magazine has a place in classrooms is a question not yet ready for more than a partial answer. It can be answered for college classes in American literature, where *Discovery*, in its new guise, is clearly appropriate. As clearly, *New World Writing* has a place in courses in world literature. Beyond this, the only answer yet possible is that always unsatisfactory one: It depends. It depends on whether the use contemplated is by assignment or by recommendation. It depends on what sort of individuals compose the class; and this, in turn, depends in large part on the institution—on

the climate of opinion inside it and surrounding it. It depends heavily, too, on how far a teacher has led his students, or can lead them, toward intelligent discrimination. Without more discrimination than that demanded by the formula story, readers will inevitably flounder. If they flounder, they will, as always, derogate what they cannot master and so be the more ready to agree that all stories are a waste of time except the sedative or the "action" ones.

Teachers have even more reason than editors for exercising caution. Their social responsibility is no less, the harm they can do quite as irreparable. In the face of any innovation, this of the pocket magazines among the rest, they have occasion to pause and study and consider and perhaps make application of Pope's cautionary line already quoted. In these new periodicals, though, are possible allies. It is the part of wisdom to know them and to watch their progress.

## Voice and Verse in Dylan Thomas' Play

HENRY W. WELLS<sup>1</sup>

WHEN Dylan Thomas died last year, it was generally recognized that a lyric poet of exceptional power had been lost at a critical stage in the development of our imaginative literature. By the spring of 1953 the part of the public best informed in such matters knew that he had composed a poetic drama, *Under Milk Wood*, which he had himself read in public and which had been several times given successful readings by a voice ensemble. But not until the welcome surprise of its appearance in the February number of *Mademoiselle* did the public enjoy the

<sup>1</sup> Columbia University.

opportunity of reading the work. It now appears to be an impressive legacy to our literature, a distinctly new and stimulating acquisition to our restless and singularly agitated culture. Of one thing we are assured: the play leaves both its readers and hearers deeply moved and seriously impressed.

Although some academicians might think it even yet premature to speculate on the piece, such a position would really be overcautious. True, Thomas died while he still had his manuscript under revision. At the request of *Mademoiselle*, he made slight condensations. The ver-

sion used for dramatic readings in New York contained at least one bawdy song not as yet printed. It is just possible that the comparatively abrupt ending indicates that the final words had not even been found. A new version will appear shortly in book form. But every indication exists that the text as first printed presents a profoundly studied work in a form acceptable to its author and emphatically worthy of the closest scrutiny. Not impossibly, scholars, after their familiar fashion, will dispute the definitive text for generations. But modern poetry and poetic drama clamor for first aid and could only be embarrassed by the last judgment. The play will be and should be examined as it stands. Thomas approved this text and he himself will, obviously, approve no other. And the play at once shows him to be an even greater innovator in the long than in the short poem. In itself all but unique, it almost certainly will exercise a strong influence on the poetic and dramatic literature of the next few years. It is not too soon to consider along what lines this influence may lie.

Perhaps the best way to describe Thomas' remarkable creation, much unlike his earlier poems, is to state how it resembles or differs from a few generally known works. There are likenesses to James Joyce in an occasional bold treatment of language and in restriction of the time of the action to a day and the subject to life within a single town. But the style of Thomas' play is much more open and less obscure than that of Joyce's principal works. Thomas focuses upon his native town and district somewhat as Masters does in his *Spoon River Anthology*. But Thomas is much less satirical than the American. In fact, he is romantic and almost sentimental; he writes an apology for his society that might be

called a modern Welsh "Cotter's Saturday Night." Again, it might be called "The Merry Wives of Llareggub," so much does it resemble in spirit the lines of Shakespeare's most rustic play, rich in folklore, in bawdry, and, to quote from another of Shakespeare's plays, in "country matters." Once more to change the image, Thomas' work is a vast choral composed of lyric passages, where all the parts have several entrances and exits. There are in all fifty-six speaking roles. Thomas' humorous play often suggests the Chaucer of the *Canterbury Tales*, which depicts a similar number of type characters. It reminds us also of William Langland's memorable description of "the fair field full of folk." But even more nearly than it resembles any poem whatsoever, it suggests a painting of a kermis by Pieter Brueghel. In brief, it is folk art in a modern key.

*Under Milk Wood* is a profound poem but not, from one point of view, a difficult one. Many in the audiences which have heard it read, and read fairly rapidly, and who have never seen it in print, have obviously enjoyed it greatly. Innumerable as are its nuances, its innovations are, or should be, outstandingly clear, though their causes and consequences present material for much speculation. These are chiefly twofold, just as innovations in any art generally fall into two categories, those concerning the genre, or art form, and those concerning style. In both respects this work proves radical. Its form is a new type of drama for voices; its style, a new type of dramatic lyricism based on rhythms stronger than most poetic prose, freer than most accepted verse, a unique creation of Thomas' extraordinary lyrical powers intricately adjusted to the requirements of poetic drama. In short, we have a new species of drama for voices and a new

variety of lyrical drama. Thomas makes his own adjustments to both drama and poetry. The ideal form of this play is a long-playing record; I should even prefer to call it not voice drama, not radio drama, not stage drama, but phonographic drama. Furthermore, it presents a new kind of lyric drama, by which is meant that the entire work is a series of lyric episodes where the form and intensity of the short lyric poem is perfectly assimilated into the form and scope of the long and serious dramatic poem. One might go a long way back for any rough analogy. It might, for example, perhaps be not absurdly said that as Aeschylus wedded dialogue to song and thus created Greek tragedy as we know it, Thomas weds lyricism, which he conceives as a vocal art, to fiction and thus creates phonographic poetic drama. He is thus in at least two ways an innovator.

*Under Milk Wood* is drama because it is vocalized dialogue, because it exists through impersonations achieved by actual speech, and moreover with impersonations where contrast and conflict create the high tension demanded by the successful dramatic poem. Drama is not essentially plot, as Aristotle suggested, nor is it essentially theatrical, as the public of about 1900 generally supposed. For the last twenty-five years we have all accepted the notion of radio drama, which obviously is not a stage play. Drama for voices has thus become a thoroughly acceptable idea.

During the second quarter of the present century the ear has come to mean more and more for the art of poetry. This condition in part reflects the leadership of music in the assembly of modern arts. Poets of outstanding musical power have everywhere gained favor. Much of T. S. Eliot's exalted reputation springs from his possession of a musical ear equal to

that of the paradoxically neglected Edmund Spenser. And even the wider circle of persons enjoying verse, as represented by the audience for radio plays, that so far exceeds in numbers the subscribers to the little magazines, bears witness to a new sensibility to imaginative language as aurally apprehended. Thomas enters the literary scene on the crest of this rising wave, as a great voice that death has not silenced.

It should be noted that this reverberating wave has on the whole risen more rapidly and loftily in England than in America. The eloquence of the English language appears in America to belong rather to prose than to lyricism or to verse. Almost all the major British poets have, sometimes with grotesque consequences, aspired to be a Shakespeare, by which is meant to write poetic plays in the grand manner. Eliot, Auden, Spender, and Yeats have all contributed their poetic plays. A British poet generally begins with lyrical or narrative verse—say with sonnets or with "Venus and Adonis,"—and, becoming less concerned with himself and more interested in others, at length aspires to dramatic poetry. Thomas simply followed an unacknowledged tradition. He lived to write a fine play, but, unlike Eliot, did not also persist in writing a dull one.

In the United States the radio drama, fallen violently upon propaganda, chiefly served the conscience of the country during the years of the depression and the New Deal. Unfortunately for our poetry, when the country so happily emerged from the depression, recovered from the New Deal, and committed its conscience to the care of the junior senator from Wisconsin, the radio drama as initiated by Archibald MacLeish, Norman Corwin, Stephen Vincent Benét, and others of like complexion largely declined,

further suffering from the lugubrious eclipse of television. But in England the contrary has occurred. Louis MacNeice fortunately assumed command of the cultural programs of the British Broadcasting Corporation. He himself and a large number of the chief British poets have written plays and conducted programs over this system, for which Thomas was himself a free-lance worker. His incomparable voice was heard over its airy circuit, and here he gave eloquent readings with narrative, characterization, and local color clearly preparatory for the construction of his dramatic landmark.

The powerful innovation of *Under Milk Wood* shows to what considerable degree its author was indebted to the British radio drama and how with his superior gifts he himself stepped forward and beyond the framework of its more limiting conventions. The story here is quite simple. Following a thoroughly reasonable and respectable theory, the first designers of the radio play determined that it should be neither mere dialogue nor a mere recording of stage plays, but, in the broadest sense of the word, a play of sounds. As so commonly with our mechanized arts, the machinery tended at first to master the art, simply because our ingenuity in devising machinery so far surpasses even our considerable imagination in art itself. The radio play became a domain of ten noises to one word. So, as recorded for the air, the storm in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, for example, quite drowned the less sonorous words of the bard; the knocking at the gate became more potent than the knocking of the poet's verses at our heart.

Thomas' ambivalent work is and is not a radio play. It is certainly written with the thought of radio performance, with little or no thought of stage production

in any form, and with the rapidly achieved conventions of radio drama clearly in mind. But it differs from orthodox radio plays in that its sound track is at least ten parts speech or song to one part noise. It is even much closer to opera, or music drama, than to the usual radio play, not only because of the incantational quality of its speech but because of the considerable amount of actual singing. All the fifty-odd stage directions refer to sound, either to the tone of the voices or to the accompaniment of musical or natural sounds. This is unmistakably in the manner of the radio play, yet only up to a certain point. *Under Milk Wood* is rightly called "a play for voices."

So radically does Thomas' work differ from the not incomparable work of MacNeice and his more representative associates, that *Under Milk Wood* may be said to be a new type of art. There is a vast difference between Thomas' piece and such an excellent, though orthodox, radio play as *The Dark Tower*, with words by Louis MacNeice and music by Benjamin Britten. To mention but one difference, the first presumes a full orchestra; the other, little more instrumental music than the accordion, the natural accompaniment to the folksong. (An organ, to be sure, supplies an undertone to the words of "Organ Morgan" but is certainly inconspicuous.) In a well-considered preface, MacNeice modestly declares his words to be pale without aid from Britten's music. But Thomas' play is surely not pale even when heard with no instrumental music whatsoever, although it is to be regretted that in recent public performances this minor factor has been altogether neglected.

-- The best way at present to consider the type of work that Thomas creates is clearly to think of it as a phonographic

recording. Thus it retains its dominant characteristics as a play for voices without a confusing association with a genre of radio drama to which it is directly allied but to which in no sense does it properly belong. Moreover, its truly dramatic quality appears when one considers that this recording should be not of Thomas' own voice but of a very considerable cast of characters, much larger than any so far assembled for the play upon any platform. Thus recorded, *Under Milk Wood* should make probably the best speech record as yet to be produced in English. It would not be analogous to *The Dark Tower* or to a recording of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Of this particular species Thomas may well be regarded as the Aeschylus.

It will not be sufficient to observe, however, that the play is voice drama, for it is also lyrical drama. And here is seen a further major contribution. No writer, I suppose, has previously succeeded in accomplishing what Thomas accomplishes in this regard. He has composed approximately thirty-six dramatic lyrics, or Welsh folk lieder, and fused them into a single dramatic, or symphonic, poem. With but one or two exceptions, each "lyric" gives us two or more voices. Most contain a miniature but striking drama in themselves, a contention, for example, between husband and wife, lover and lover, friend and foe. The lyrical form becomes for Thomas, as for Donne and the composers of the Elizabethan madrigals and the medieval verse dialogues, a drama in little.

Only a stout volume could expound all the devices whereby Thomas achieves his over-all unity; but that his lyrics are in style and subject closely interwoven must be abundantly clear. There are many unifying conceptions. No play by Plautus or Terence complies more pedantically to the unities of time and place,

the twenty-four hours and the single village. Each major character appears at least three times, before dawn, during the rise of day, and during its decline and fall. Although the characters frequently appear in pairs, as Mr. and Mrs. Pugh, they not infrequently cross each other's paths, so that we have the image of a real town, where people continually consort with one another, rather than a series of views into separate rooms or houses. Again, the play is both classical and social. Love, or passion, helps to bring houses in different sections of the town into contact with each other. There are small yet momentous repetitions in the presentation, as the abrupt reversal of attitude often found in the humorous conclusion of the lyrical episode, just as so often in the last line or two of a Shakespearean sonnet.

Chief among the specifically unifying characters is the blind Captain Cat, perfect symbol for the radio or phonographic play, the cat being the animal that best sees in the dark, itself a symbol for the inner eye. The Reverend Eli Jenkins, another such unifying figure, takes the entire town for his parish. Another important public figure is the postman, Willy Nilly, who by virtue of his profession is, like the poet, all things to all men. And there are public places, as the beach, Bethesda graveyard, the Women's Welfare Hall, the tavern, the central square, the town pump, and the one long main thoroughfare, Coronation Street, stretching from Bay View, the villa of Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard, on the hill, to Bottom Cottage, beside the harbor.

Over all the town hang Llareggub Hill and Milk Wood, symbols of the persisting forces of nature and of human nature, the masculine and feminine, and of all the abiding ironies of our dramatic existence. The outward confusion of the imagery is further civilized by the inter-

weaving of solo, duo, and choral passages, the artful disposition of voices that come and go, as in the variegated terrain of an eighteenth-century oratorio. The use of the two "announcers" helps us to realize throughout an address to the inner no less than to the outer ear. Notwithstanding his emphatic prejudices, leading Thomas so much to prefer the jolly sailors to prudes such as Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard, he remains at heart a romantic optimist, one whose view of the unity of mankind is sustained by a mystical conviction that all is somehow good. The poet, consulting human flesh, composes what he significantly terms "the White Book" of the village. For the poet, in a sense beyond good and evil, observes both good and evil and pronounces that all is at least pure. This distinctly romantic view of ethics further aids in conferring unity on his elaborately constructed composition.

The second major observation of this article proceeds directly from the first and is really subordinate to it. The new type of drama, or voice drama, is made possible by the poet's power to transcend otherwise disruptive forces. He takes a stand actually beyond the familiar distinctions of verse and prose; moreover, his own style cannot with any satisfaction be termed poetic prose. His important innovations here repay close attention.

Far more sharply than Thomas, Shakespeare and his associates distinguish between verse and prose. These two factors the great Elizabethans use for certain well-recognized and distinct purposes. Thomas greatly diverges from these clear principles of the logically minded Renaissance poets. The passages of his play printed as prose are actually more rhythmical, more strongly accented, more highly alliterated, and more powerfully addressed to the ear than

most verse. Conversely, the passages printed as verse comprise in general the parts of his play intended to be sung and are essentially in the style of folk rhyme and much less sophisticated or developed as poetry than his own prose, or, for that matter, than the songs in Shakespeare's plays. But in general it may be said with much confidence that Thomas in this play creates an even more radical poetic style than in his own remarkable lyrics published earlier. His rhythms are more pronounced, racier, more regularized and moving than in "poetic prose" or "free verse" as written and defined, for example, by that insatiable mistress of definition, the late Amy Lowell. In fact, his verse-music possesses these qualities even more strongly than does the prose of James Joyce, to which Thomas, of course, is deeply indebted. His accents are far stronger than those of the conventional iambic verse, whose principles he so completely overrides. First and last, Thomas remains lyrical. The most cursory attention to the style of *Under Milk Wood* shows the approximately two-score lyrics to be in essence all that could possibly be required of poetry and even of verse, although it is a new kind of verse and poetry. Thomas is not impossibly the first writer to fashion a successful play out of a lyric sequence.

This article has already presented an argument to justify the word "play," or "drama," as describing *Under Milk Wood*. It is further presumed on the basis of what has thus far been said, with the support, of course, of the reader's own observations, that no doubt exists that the work is also in every proper sense of the word poetry. Thomas, then, gives us both a new kind of drama and a new kind of poetry. The drama is new in being "voice drama." The poetry is new in achieving a new order of versification. But the latter statement must in itself

remain highly inadequate without further remark that the new technique in verse is merely part of a thoroughgoing reform in style, itself considered in all its aspects. Thus Thomas departs nearly—though not quite—as far from the orthodox imagery of modern verse as from its prevalent rhythms. He renounces the high poetic diction and imagery of much of his own early verse and of such notable modern poems as T. S. Eliot's "Four Quartets," or Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning," in favor of a racy, realistic imagery bearing the same ambivalent relation between poetry and fiction that his rhythms bear between verse and prose. Since Thomas is always—and in the play about Captain Cat more, perhaps, than in any of his preceding works—above all auditory in his address, it becomes natural to approach his innovation in style by way of his strongly original versification. But his musical ear for verse is in a sense merely a phase or even a symptom of his enterprising and singularly powerful imagination, appealing so deeply to the present age. He points the way not merely to a new system of versification but to a radically new poetic style.

In conclusion it may be well to observe that the extraordinary originality and

high significance claimed for Thomas' play should be taken for neither more nor less than intended. It seems only too likely that Thomas' originality today will become the convention of tomorrow. Quite possibly the coming generation of poets and playwrights will find in *Under Milk Wood* an influence as compelling as poets of the last generation discovered in *The Waste Land*. This is merely to say that both poems are eminent; it is not on that account to declare that either is in a more philosophical sense good art or the art that the age should or will, by the latter part of our century, find chiefly in demand. Both these poems, for example, are not improperly viewed as variations of the romantic outlook on art and life. *Under Milk Wood* is clearly an innovation, but this is not to say that it innovates wisely or sufficiently. Its best qualities, in the eyes of the present writer, are those of an earthy humanity and a catholic humor, both frequently in the tradition of Pantagruel—qualities which it also shares with Chaucer and with Burns. And Thomas' play takes long strides forward. The critics should indeed be impressed; but they will do ill to be virtually bowled over, as their predecessors were a generation ago by *The Waste Land*.

### What Do You Think?

Next fall *College English* will publish reader symposiums on the questions listed below. We invite our readers to contribute statements of *not more than 600 words* on any of these:

1. What should we do about individual differences among our students at the college level?
2. When should the teacher of literature lecture? When allow or provoke discussion?
3. What are the relative merits of extensive versus intensive reading of literature?
4. Should the college teacher try to raise student taste in movie, radio, and television?

We also invite you to propose other problems you would like discussed.  
Send your contribution *before August 1*, if possible.

## *Was "Shakespeare" a Woman?*

SIDNEY L. GULICK, JR.<sup>1</sup>

An answer to the Baconians and their derivatives; for nothing can convince the partisans of the Stratfordian.

THE greatest literary mystery of all time," it has been called—the identity of the author of the plays which are known as Shakespeare's. The world has seen attempts to identify the playwright as Francis Bacon, or as the Earl of Southampton or Rutland or Derby or Oxford, or as Sir Walter Raleigh, or even as Francis Bacon's brother Anthony. In his *Shakespeare of Stratford*, the late Tucker Brooke, Sterling Professor of English in Yale University, mentions these and continues: "The desire to see the face behind the mask is not only legitimate, but necessary."

Under the encouragement of such an authority, the quest becomes irresistible. Further, no new interpretation could add a higher degree of confusion to a subject already so expertly complicated. Let us therefore consider the evidence for one almost too obvious possibility—that the poet-playwright was not any of these mentioned above, was not even a man at all, but a woman. The argument can perhaps best be presented under four headings: first, the acknowledged favoritism shown throughout the plays to women characters; second, very closely related, the spectacular inversion of the subject in one great play; third, the treatment of sex; and fourth, the revelation of a hitherto unsuspected cipher, incredibly open. In conclusion, certain further hypotheses will come in for brief mention. In the dis-

cussion which follows, the reader should distinguish between "Shakespeare" the playwright and William Shakespeare the actor from Stratford, whose name became associated with these plays; the latter is generally referred to as the "Stratfordian."

First, then, the evidence of favoritism: The writer of these plays has long been famous for depicting women with unsurpassed delicacy and understanding. Thus Coleridge, 140 years ago, wrote: "In Shakespeare all the elements of womanhood are holy. . . . He has drawn [woman's character], indeed, in all its distinctive energies of faith, patience, constancy, fortitude . . . —[it] sees all things in and by the light of the affections, and errs, if it ever err, in the exaggerations of love alone." In other words, Coleridge believes that the author of these plays presents women as idealized characters; obviously, then, as any man can see, they are presented with prejudice.

This prejudiced idealization takes two forms, moral and intellectual; for both we find abundant illustration. In play after play, the women are the admirable characters, noble, loyal, and innocent. Beatrice, in *Much Ado about Nothing*, is the first to stand up for Hero, that flower-like bride deserted at the altar by Claudio. Later, to be sure, Benedick joins her, but only through Beatrice's deft management. With Marina—in the

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brothel scenes, the only part of *Pericles* which the critics now assign to "Shakespeare"—notice the titillation of the female fancy: a pure young woman is subjected to extreme peril but brilliantly protects her chastity. Desdemona, too innocent even to imagine such wickedness as Iago's, is by her very purity unable to answer Othello's accusations. Emilia is her husband's dupe, true to Iago until she finally learns how vile he is; then, with a magnificent loyalty to her mistress, she defends the dead Desdemona and is herself the victim of Iago. Lady Macbeth, besides being more quick-witted than her husband and understanding him as he did not understand himself, had the compunction which he lacked—she could not kill Duncan, the king, whereas he could. He then sank into an orgy of murder which her finer nature—finer, that is, than his—could not support. Two ogresses, indeed, do appear in "Shakespeare's" plays: Goneril and Regan—wickedness incarnate. But please note: On the one hand, they are the dramatic background for the integrity and forgiving tenderness of Cordelia; on the other hand, it takes two of them to balance Edgar, a man and the archfiend of the play. Thus even the wicked women are shown as less bad than their male counterparts; the heroines are unsmutched.

The women are also more intelligent than the men. Who has not chuckled to watch Beatrice winding Benedick around her little finger? Or Hotspur's wife angling from him the information about his plot, which he ostensibly conceals from her? Portia, to many the leading character in *The Merchant of Venice*, wins her desired husband, her intelligence enabling her to circumvent the stipulations of her father's will without actually breaking her oath. She then confounds the villain, in this showing her mind to be

keener than any man's in Venice (for which some of her modern critics cannot forgive her), and finally tricks her husband with the ring, thus making sure that for the rest of their lives she will have him safely tethered. In *Twelfth Night*, Viola and Sebastian, more nearly identical twins (female, of course) than sister and brother, carry off the prizes, in one seeming person capturing both the duke and Olivia; Viola has all the romance, shows all the intelligence. And so throughout the comedies. Helena, the pure but deserted, outwits (and captures) the brutish Bertram in *All's Well*. Even Miranda gets her man, the first she has ever seen. That's an episode to give men pause.

In the tragedies, the story is much the same. However unhappy Troilus may be, Cressida makes eyes at the men. Juliet grows up before Romeo does, though he is unquestionably older than she. Deeply in love as she is, still she keeps her feet on the ground, makes sure his purpose is honorable, has her nurse arrange the details, gets herself married, and manages her actions with intelligence as well as with courage. In the nurse's phrase, Romeo's a dishclout to her! There's little contrast between her youth and Cleopatra's maturity: The serpent of old Nile enmeshes one of the great men of the time. Remember, this was that Mark Antony who outsmarted Brutus and the other conspirators. But in Cleopatra's hands he is as pliable as dough. And he loves it!

There's no question that in "Shakespeare's" plays women are portrayed not only as better than men but as more intelligent too. Let us face the matter squarely: Would a MAN thus betray his kind?

One play has been conspicuously absent from our discussion—*Hamlet*. Perhaps, some will think, a consideration of

this play will confute the argument above. The two women are neither noble nor intelligent. Ophelia is a mere shadow, a willing slave to a foolish and old despot; Gertrude is frail, her I.Q. only moderate. Hamlet is perhaps "Shakespeare's" most engaging hero—modest, brave, witty, intelligent, and withal terribly in earnest to do right. King Claudius is a fitting antagonist, himself intelligent and brave, for all his faults. Do not the men come out better in *Hamlet* than the women?

To understand this play aright, one must know something of Elizabethan times and customs. Consider that even a century ago, in Queen Victoria's time, prejudice against women was so strong that Mary Ann Evans felt she must write under a man's name—George Eliot. In Elizabeth's time it was *all* a man's world: in the theater no women actors; no woman known to be writing for the stage. To be sure, out of some 197 names listed by Sir E. K. Chambers in his monumental *Elizabethan Stage* (in his 300-page chapter on playwrights), four women's names do appear: one, Elizabeth, Lady Carey, wrote a "closet play"; a second, Queen Elizabeth, is listed as having translated a portion of one play (from Latin, of course—an imitation of Seneca); a third, the Countess of Pembroke, Sir Philip Sidney's sister, translated from the French one play, for private performance, and wrote an entertainment when she expected Queen Elizabeth to visit her; the fourth, Jane, Lady Lumley, translated *Iphigenia*, by Euripides. This last may have been given by the boy actors of Paul's, in 1571. But these are all, and none was shown as ever creating plays for public presentation. What was true of the theater was true of the Elizabethan world. Except for the Queen, it was all a man's world.

Such being the position of women, our

next observation follows (in Polonius' words) as the night the day: there could be no serious drama centering on a woman. Dekker and Middleton, it is true, could write an extravagant comedy, *The Roaring Girl*, but it is noteworthy that the protagonist had to appear in man's clothes. Dekker's two-part tragicomedy, *The Honest Whore*, presented the melodrama of chastity—as seen by a man. Thomas Heywood's *Woman Killed with Kindness*, a tragedy, centered about men's actions and ideas: we look into the mind and heart not of Ann Frankford but of her husband. Later, to be sure, Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* and his *White Devil* depict women's hearts but still do not center about women.

Hence one must meet the question: in Elizabethan England how best could a woman writer of tragedies present a woman facing great tragedy, laying bare the inner recesses of her heart? The answer practically shouts: a double masquerade—a woman writer, under a man's name, writes of a woman behind a man's mask. The jest of disguise—Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Viola in *Twelfth Night*—in *Hamlet* becomes metamorphosis in earnest. How simple! How beautiful an escape from the cruel conventions of a masculine theater! And how well the character of the protagonist fits in with our observations a few lines above: Hamlet is the most intelligent of the characters; Hamlet is the noblest of them all.

Every reader will grant, then, on the basis of these examples (which could easily be doubled), that our authoress shows partiality to her sex. But that very word "sex" raises a further question, one that will not down, one that surely must be faced by anyone not yet convinced by this discussion. Almost everywhere in the plays, such a person will object, one will find scabrous witticisms, *double-enten-*

*dres*, such salacious indecencies, in fact, that editors pointedly ignore them. Do not such passages mean something? Lest there be any doubt about it, refer to the recent work on the subject, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, by Eric Partridge. This 225-page book, two-thirds of it annotated glossary, surely provides evidence as to the nature of the writer of the plays; and surely—should one say?—since no lady would confess to the kind of mind implied therein, the case is proved: a man must have written such passages, and, since they run almost continuously through the plays, a man must have written the plays.

But there is a two-fold flaw in that argument: Every successful dramatist, as we all know, is conditioned by his audience and must write for their tastes—in this case, for the Elizabethan world of men (as did Aphra Behn, a century later). And, further, the writer does not confess herself to be a woman, much less a lady.

Thus the argument proves nothing. Fundamentally, all we can safely say about these plays, in this connection, is that the writer must have been interested in sex, to provide material for a 225-page book on the subject. And who will assert that interest in sex is limited to men?

Having thus disposed of the major objections to the new understanding of the subject, we come to the ultimate in proof, immediately recognizable as putting the quietus to all other so-called interpretations, Baconian or otherwise—what I may perhaps be excused for calling, with some pride, “the greatest cipher.” Obvious for 350 years, actually tabulated fully seventy-five years ago, this startling evidence has incomprehensibly remained neglected until the present moment.

Since the middle of the last century Shakespearean scholars have combed through the texts of the plays to find

evidence as to the order of composition and likewise evidence of collaboration or, in other words, of authorship. The “regular” scholars, if I may so refer to those who hold that the Stratfordian wrote these plays, have established, and universally accept, these tables. They are found in many places, such as Sir Edmund K. Chambers’ two-volume *William Shakespeare*, Tucker Brooke’s *Shakespeare of Stratford*, and the like. All list such items as the number and percentage of lines of blank verse, short lines, rhyming lines, and—yes, in plain English—of feminine endings! (WEBSTER: “An ending of a verse with an unstressed and, usually, hypermetric syllable.”) More than that, the percentage of feminine endings is shown as having been small in the 1590’s, from under 10 per cent to a high of 19.5 per cent, then suddenly larger from 1600, running mostly above 25 per cent, to a crescendo of 35.4 per cent in *The Tempest*, as though the writer had despaired of otherwise getting her message into the hands of succeeding generations. One must note that Chambers’ list of feminine endings, totaled, runs to 11,166!

With such evidence before us, what more is to be said?

If it is then considered proved that the plays were written by a woman, the great question becomes, WHO? One candidate immediately leaps to mind, a woman eminent, learned, at once cognizant of the world and entranced by the stage. This is none other than Queen Elizabeth. Furthermore, we know, as already stated, that she did actually turn her hand to the translation of a pseudo-Senecan play; the MS is extant. Much could be written on internal evidence of her authorship and on her temperamental affinity with the stage. But one difficulty does appear. Certain of “Shakespeare’s” plays released after Elizabeth’s

death in 1603 reflect later materials and contemporary events; no mere editing could account for them. Such an identification hence becomes impossible and must accordingly be discarded.

A second claimant comes to mind, a daughter of an eminent family, able in her youth to capture the love of—and get married to—perhaps the wittiest and most intellectual man of letters of the time (ignoring, of course, the Stratfordian at this juncture). The girl was Anne More, better known as the wife of John Donne; on account of their runaway marriage he was imprisoned (whereupon he wrote the famous quip, "John Donne, Anne Donne, undone"). If the "Shakespearean" habit, treated earlier in this study, of presenting the women as more intelligent than the men holds good in the life of our presumed authoress, the youthful Anne More Donne (married at sixteen), being thus more intelligent than the keenest wit among contemporary menfolk, would without question have been able to pen the great tragedies we revere so highly.

But, on further consideration, a difficulty appears here, too. Anne was born in 1585; *Romeo and Juliet* is generally dated 1595—too early for any precocity

to have achieved it. Even the date of the first printing, 1597, would come when Anne was only twelve, or two years younger than the child-bride Juliet. More reluctantly than with Elizabeth, we must discard the idea that Anne More Donne was the playwright.

(Some years ago both Anne Hathaway and Anne Whately were identified as the playwright [Dr. James G. McManaway is kind enough to remind me]. Such preposterous suggestions need only to be mentioned to be discredited: As to Anne [or Agnes] Hathaway, what woman of intelligence enough to write the plays would succumb to the blandishments of an actor-vagabond and marry him? And Anne Whately was assertedly a nun!)

What then remains? This thought: an author of the caliber of "Shakespeare," capable at will of leaving an identity of womanhood so plainly to be seen that he who runs may read, would be equally capable of preventing any further violation of a secret. The authoress, in other words, wanted readers to know her sex; readers can now see as much. But the authoress wished equally to conceal her true identity; what can our mere masculine intelligence avail to lift the mask? There we must perforce rest.

## If I Taught Creative Writing

JOANNE CLARE WHEELER<sup>1</sup>

I WAS trained in three arts: music, dance, and creative writing. The highlight of my musical career occurred when I was six: I won a city contest as the bass half of a piano duet. I suspect that my success had less connection with musicianship than with such social accomplishments as wearing a ruffled blue organdy dress and forbearing to run

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howling from the stage, a fortunate disaster that removed most of my competitors. My terpsichorean triumphs began even earlier. At three I charmed a certain Palace Theater audience twice daily for two weeks by doing "splits" in the air while standing on my head as a yellow butterfly. Since these two events, my musical and dancing careers have gone steadily downhill.

When I compare the study and discipline I have invested in music and dance, at which at best I am an amateur, with that which I have invested in creative writing, my chosen career, I am appalled. My hobbies cost me an aggregate of thirty-one years of scales, metronomes, and aching sessions at the ballet bar. I began inventing stories when I was four; I majored in creative literature at college; I hold a Master's degree in English. Yet I cannot claim that I ever served writing a comparable apprenticeship. While most of the blame for this haphazard training is mine, I cannot help placing part of it on my writing teachers. If I taught creative writing, I should not teach it the way it was taught me.

Actually I was never taught to write. I doubt that I ever had a writing teacher who did not open his course by warning, "Nobody can teach you how to write." I do not recall being told, "Nobody can teach you how to play the piano" or "Nobody can show you the basic ballet positions." It is true that not everybody can be taught to write artistically; but to tell students in a creative writing class, who would not be there unless they had some talent, that it is impossible for them to receive practical instruction is as foolish in my opinion as it would be to tell a potential Heifetz that he must learn to be a concert violinist without benefit of lessons.

The unvarying method of my college writing teachers was this: They gave speeches designed to fire us students to "express ourselves"; they read dutifully all such self-expressions when and if we produced them; they pronounced judgment—"That's pretty good" or "Somehow that doesn't come off." Occasionally they spotted something specific to like or dislike; this helped. More rarely they gave us reasons for their opinions; this was like being handed gold.

I do not entirely blame my teachers for their teaching method. It was the almost inevitable offspring of the marriage of two academic idols which they, in their turn, had been taught to revere. One was the *laissez faire* policy of progressive education; one was the belief that creative inspiration is God-given. I shall not argue the merits of progressive education in general; I do propose that it is not an adequate substitute for apprenticeship in the arts. And while I agree that creative inspiration is unteachable, I insist that ideas are the beginning and end, the instigation and product, of fiction, not the act of writing it or even its material. To be born with the capacity for inventing stories is like being born with an "ear." No one who lacks a sense of pitch can play the violin, but neither can he become a professional until he has studied scales and chords and mastered fingering. I believe that talented writing students can be taught the theory of their art, as students of all other arts are taught it, and that if they practice the component skills of their art, as all other students practice them, their work as a whole will improve. This corollary sounds so obvious as to be redundant. Yet if it were acted upon in our colleges, it would revolutionize writing courses.

Specifically, there are at least four types of practical writing instruction: literary history and criticism, the craft of writing, proper working habits, and the business of being a writer. Two of these, work habits and writing as business, were never touched upon in my instruction; two, literary history and criticism and the craft of writing, received only the most haphazard attention.

As a high school junior I was excused from the regular literature course to study writing. This practice was extended in my schooling until, during my

senior year at college, I earned half my credits by writing. I was graduated as a literature major on the strength of four one-semester courses. It was in graduate school that I took my first Shakespeare, my first Chaucer, that I read Aristotle's *Poetics* for the first time. I admit that it was my choice to bypass these subjects as an undergraduate; my point is that as an apprentice writer I should not have been allowed to make it. It is not logical to require fewer literature courses of students who intend to create literature than of students who intend merely to read it. Under the present system of permitting writing credits to substitute indiscriminately for literature credits, this can happen.

A prospective writer has a claim on the literary tradition of at least his own language. He has a right to know how he fits into the tradition, how his work resembles and departs from past and contemporary work. He has a right to listen to educated guesses on why he writes as he does—why he uses the stream of consciousness, for example, who used it first, how it relates to Freud and “depth psychology.” A prospective writer also should be able to anticipate trends intelligently, to value what is truly original in his work, and to distinguish and reduce what is superseded or unconsciously imitative. He cannot do these things if he is “excused” from literature or allowed to flirt with it at his fancy.

While imitation is bad art, it is a good exercise. That writers learn by imitation is almost a platitude; yet I do not remember as a writing student ever being required to study classics with this end in view. I was once told to “write a sonnet in imitation of Keats’s early period,” but this was in a literature, not a writing, class. In fulfilling the assignment I learned as much about the craft of poetry as I did about the reading of Keats. Cre-

ative writing teachers should borrow this method, taking care to acquaint the student with the model work’s historical place, literary form, and specific faults and virtues sufficiently to enable him to use it sensibly.

In order to write my Keats imitation, I had first to look up “sonnet” in the encyclopedia. There I was introduced to the contributions of Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Spenser; there I learned that, while all sonnets had fourteen lines, their rhyme schemes differed and that there were characteristics other than form that made a poem a sonnet. It is not asking too much, I think, that writing students be spared recourse to the encyclopedia for such information. Their knowledge of the definition, evolution, and present status of the literary forms they will work with should not be left to chance. Someone should instruct them on such terms as “sonnet,” “ode,” “dactyl,” “feminine rhyme ending.” Someone should require them to compare a few picaresque stories to *Pamela* and *Tom Jones* to find out why the latter two are called “novels,” why the others, technically, are not.

A classical plot consists of exposition, inciting moment, development, climax, denouement, final suspense, and conclusion. These are concrete elements that can be analyzed, illustrated by example, and student-reproduced; they are not vague references to “conflict” and “movement.” I first learned these words when I providentially ran across them in graduate research. It does not surprise me that my generation is accused of “no plot”; nobody ever showed us what plot was.

I do not mean of course that all modern fiction should be classically plotted. I do mean that every young writer should know about plot and about past and current educated opinion as to its

value. I mean that he should know about variety and unity, moral instruction versus entertainment, and the many other classics of literary theory. This requires that he be systematically acquainted not only with great writers, but with great critics, from Plato, through Castelvetro and De Vega, to Wilbur Cross. A final benefit that the writing student is entitled to from his college education is sufficient background on the major critical controversies, old and new, solved and unsolved, to permit his conscious formulation of a working philosophy.

Every medium of artistic communication has its basic components, a system by which they are organized, and rules and procedures for manipulating them. Music has its intervals and rhythms, dance its positions and steps. The analytic manipulation of language is called "grammar." Usually the student writer receives his last formal grammar instruction in high school, where he learns the difference between comma and semicolon, how to diagram a complex sentence, how to write paragraphs with topic sentences.

Such knowledge provides the barest ABC's of the writing craft. Advanced grammar or even the artistic application of elementary grammar is never taught. Every professional writer must learn them, if not in school, then for himself. Teachers could save him time.

A writer learns, for example, that punctuation not only makes meaning clear but contributes to pace and mood. He learns that if he deletes the "ands" in a series of compound clauses and changes the commas to semicolons, he gets a faster, more formal effect. He learns that if the same humorous event is related first in simple sentences and short words, then in complex sentences and long

words, the two scenes will tend toward different kinds of humor, one folksy, one sophisticated. These are examples of applied elementary grammar.

Advanced grammar to a creative writer includes, in addition to effect, form. It means predetermining a shape for his story, then pushing the words around to fit it. It means being able to cut 1,000 words to 700, not by removing ideas but by such tricks as combining "luminous grayish pinkish white" to "pearly." This, in turn, involves another advanced skill, the use of literary devices, such as metaphor. A writer's grammar means knowing where to use dialogue, where narrative; how much description he has time for in a short story and where to put it. It means learning that if you describe a character in detail your reader's mind will be oversatiated and disgorge the whole picture but that if you repeat one or two salient features—black eyes, a crooked nose—the reader will embrace this symbol, clothing your skeleton with his own conception of its flesh.

Writer's "tricks" like these are probably infinite; no one could teach them all. But no potential writer is born without instinctive knowledge of dozens. To make him aware that he knows them, that they are tools and that there are more such tools, to increase his dexterity with them through "fingering exercises"—this would lead the student from accidental successes to professional mastery.

To my mind the one genuine betrayal of their students by writing teachers is their failure to instil proper working habits. The other three deficiencies I see in my training are deficiencies of knowledge; if knowledge is not given one way, it can be gotten another. But discipline depends on early, imposed training. Only a heroic nature disciplines itself, and

artists are not naturally heroic. Or rather, artists by nature are not consistently heroic, or consistently anything.

Artists are born temperamental; they are lifelong victims of exaggerated feelings. In that fact lies the dilemma of every artistic career. On the one hand, the artist's so-called "sensitivity," that tired label for a chronic birch-bending to little winds, is his most precious artistic possession. Without it he cannot magnify emotion sufficiently to isolate, analyze, and reproduce it. On the other hand, it is apt to play havoc with his personal relationships and professional career. To write on inspiration is joy; it is also the way to be a perpetual amateur. To write on demand, an editor's or one's own, is often to submit to art as Daniel to the Devil; it is also the only way to be a professional. This skill of mating self-indulgence with self-discipline, of turning moods on and off like faucets, is the hardest lesson a writer ever learns.

I once received honors in a writing course without writing a word for three months. I had produced a bad novel, containing many thousand more words than could possibly be required to pass the course. My teacher agreed that I was "written out." If I were, I should never have been allowed to admit it. What I needed was not sympathy but a daily assignment. If I taught creative writing, I should give such an assignment. Since inspiration cannot be forced, I should provide ideas; but every student would write something, good or bad, every day.

I think those teachers, the majority, who do not write as a career must know little of the state of bereavement in which the student, diploma and pencil in hand, sets out to free-lance his way into the world. His writing courses may not have fostered specific disciplines, but regulated school life imposed a general

one. Now that prop is gone. So is the mentor, so are the other disciples. Not only is there no one to tell him to write, but often there is no one to read when he does. An inextricable writing *habit*, hammered into him by four years of painful daily blows, could be the one nail that fastens him to his desk.

I sold all rights to my first commercially published article. I had typed "first rights only" on the title-page because I had read somewhere that this was a good idea, but I was not sure what "first rights" were. My manuscript sales voucher arrived from the magazine checked "all rights." I was afraid to protest; I suspected that the editors would ask for their check and worse, return my article. The next month the article appeared in a national digest, purchased from the original magazine for more than it had paid me.

Whose fault was that? Mine surely, but was it not also my teachers'? No writing student should be graduated from college without instruction in the business of writing. He should know proper manuscript preparation, the advantages and disadvantages of agents, current markets, copyright and royalty laws, applicable income tax rulings. He should be aware of writers' conferences, workshops, and such organizations as the Authors League of America.

There are two other areas of writing as business: research and running an office. Students should be taught how to use libraries, not how to take out a card and reserve *From Here to Eternity*, but how the Dewey system works, how to navigate the stacks, what magazine indexes, book catalogues, and specialized references are for. They should know how to mail-order government pamphlets and borrow from the Library of Congress.

It may sound presumptuous to speak of a beginner as keeping an office; but, as all beginners discover, it is more work to keep track of voluminous pink slips than to spend occasional checks. A young writer should be taught to organize correspondence, log rejections, save receipts, keep accounts, file ideas, use writers' market guides.

Talk of market guides brings to mind one final service a writing teacher can do. If he is brave, he can venture into vocational guidance, tell the student what in his opinion the student writes best. Most beginners don't yet know. An opinion, even a wrong one, is a guide until they do. I am not thinking of money now; I am thinking of time and despair.

All my complaints come down to one regret: that I was not forced to serve the rigid apprenticeship that students of arts other than writing must. In particular, my formal training lacked a systematic study of literary history and criticism,

instruction in the craft of writing, the instillation of proper working habits, and practical business information. These deficiencies left me confused and, I think, delayed my progress. Nor am I a special case. My former fellow-students are now scattered, but I write to some and hear of more. One or two have published, most are still floundering, many have given up. I cannot say, of course, that the world has lost masterpieces by our collective uncertainty; I doubt it. I do know that all these young people have definite talent and that at least at one time they wanted to write more than anything else.

Hundreds more of us enter the country's colleges every year. Whether we fail or succeed is ultimately our own problem. I think we are sufficiently honest not to blame future failures on the absence of Aristotle in Writing 1A fifteen years ago. But I also think our writing teachers could help us more than they do.

## *Language, Logic, and Creative Engineering<sup>1</sup>*

RICHARD B. VOWLES<sup>2</sup>

WHILE linguists and logicians are constantly enlarging their knowledge of language as a creative achievement, the man in the street persists in regarding it as little more than a rather obstreperous tool. Let us admit that it is a tool, but one of extraordinary complexity; then let us explore the intricate relationship language bears to other creative acts, particularly those of the research en-

gineer, in order to formulate a more adequate philosophy of language.

There are few records of the near-coincidence of language and scientific discovery, but I can instance one. Looking back on the great moment of his discovery of quaternions, Sir William Rowan Hamilton wrote:

I pulled out on the spot a pocket-book, which still exists, and made an entry, on which *at the very moment* I felt it might be worth my while to expend at least ten (or perhaps fifteen) years to come. But then it is fair to say that this was because I felt a *problem* to have been solved—an intellectual want relieved—which

<sup>1</sup> Read under the title "Can English Contribute to the Engineer's Creative Ability?" before the American Society for Engineering Education, Gainesville, Florida, June 25, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> University of Florida.

had haunted me for at least fifteen years before.<sup>3</sup>

I call your attention to this simple and compulsive act. You might think that a scientist who had been brooding over a problem for fifteen years might take his sweet time in the recording of it. But no. Instead you are witness to the almost desperate intent to get it down and get it all down, even if it took as many years in the working out.

Here you have an act of language very close to the flash of intuition but manifestly secondary to it. Now should we suppose that language was somehow wrapped up in the very moment of intuition, as some psychologists and linguists do?<sup>4</sup> Can we believe that thought is language in anything but a metaphoric sense? "Some of us struggle to find words to express our ideas," says A. N. Whitehead, unnecessarily limiting the fraternity. "If the words and their order together constitute the ideas, how does the struggle arise? We should then be struggling to obtain ideas; whereas we are conscious of ideas verbally unexpressed."<sup>5</sup> Yet there is much to be said for Cassirer's point of view: "Intuition cannot be separated from expression—and expression always involves the function of language."<sup>6</sup>

For our purposes, however, the question is academic. We are dealing with the organized creative act, the collective act

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in A. L. Porterfield, *Creative Factors in Scientific Research* ("Duke University Sociology Series" [Durham, N.C., 1941]), p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> J. B. Watson and Leonard Bloomfield, for example. See, especially, Bloomfield's *Linguistic Aspects of Science* ("International Encyclopedia of Unified Science," Vol. I, No. 4 [Chicago, 1939]), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Modes of Thought* (New York, 1938), p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> "The Influence of Language upon the Development of Scientific Thought," *Journal of Philosophy*, XXXIX (June, 1942), 326.

of industrial research. Now the research group is a carefully articulated body which has to operate as a unit to be effective. In such a *communication net*<sup>7</sup> language is not secondary but integrated in frequent and differentiated functions. Whether it is a fragmentary reconnoiter or a formal report, it represents a kind of stock-taking in the creative process. As such it is not stationary but part of the probing, driving, animated flux of research. Now and then we catch glimpses of its role in written accounts. Thomas Midgley, for example, records a group search for a now well-known refrigerant:

Plotting of boiling points, hunting for data, corrections, slide rules, log paper, eraser dirt, pencil shavings, and all the rest of the paraphernalia that takes the place of tea leaves and crystal spheres in the life of the scientific clairvoyant, were brought into play.<sup>8</sup>

Here, as Midgley implies, language, if no more than intermittent jottings, acted as a kind of catalyst, even visionary medium, to the creative act. Certainly the catalytic and cohesive instrumentality of language is even more important in the large industrial group, in that hierarchy which ranges from the theoretical scientist through the director to the supervisor of the pilot plant and, in another direction, to the public relations department.

It is important that we classify the kinds of language at work in such a hierarchy, but I suggest that the traditional classification into types of reports is inadequate because it is based on formal distinction and often on practices peculiar to this or that group. Instead, I should like to differentiate three language levels, based on qualitative differ-

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of such group relations see G. A. Miller, *Language and Communication* (New York, 1951), esp. chap. xii, "The Social Approach."

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in D. H. Killeffer, *The Genius of Industrial Research* (New York, 1948), p. 50.

ence, that obtain in any industrial situation: (1) the language of *organization*, which is largely directive and proceeds from administrative sources; (2) the language of *gestation*, which assimilates theory and data and transforms it into formal statement; and (3) the language of *dissemination*, which translates scientific complexity into something like adequate popular statement. I am not very fond of my terms, but let us hope that they will do for the time being. If nothing else, they indicate the range and variety of language which are involved.

Now let us set a group in operation. The leader states the problem much as the play director discovers the "verb" or "superproblem" of the play. His directives to researchers cannot be cut from the same cloth. Depending on his knowledge of individual capability and temperament, he must be more or less precise in his statement. Some research men resent an overly explicit directive;<sup>9</sup> others are lost unless a concrete course of action is stated.<sup>10</sup> Here, verbal strategies are of supreme importance, or the project is off to a shaky start.

The language of *gestation* ranges from the notes of a lab assistant to the language of high theory, but we usually think in terms of the latter. It is here that language is at best inadequate and unreliable, and relations must often be expressed in the nonverbal medium of mathematics. But even a theoretical physicist like Niels Bohr admits that verbal expressions are not entirely dispensable.<sup>11</sup> We might refer students who feel that mathematics is all-sufficient for their needs to this statement by

<sup>9</sup> Irving Langmuir, quoted in Killeffer, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> "Stating the Problem," *ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in W. M. Urban, *Language and Reality* (London, 1939), p. 508.

Bohr, even if they do not aspire so high. Again, the specialized language of research progress has to be modulated into a less technical form, and in a large research unit a specialized report-writer may be used for the purpose.

At the other pole of the hierarchy we find the public relations man who is painfully aware that the language of the plant and laboratory is getting further and further from the public. It is he who deals with, say, nylon in terms of coal and milk and other simple, recognizable objects. His job is not so much one of translation as of substitution. Information has, also, to be disseminated to other scientists. As the editors of *Endeavour* have recently complained, what is often pellucidly clear to an authority and his fellow-workers "may be so much gibberish to equally accomplished scientists of other interests."<sup>12</sup> Here is another specialized service function that emerges in the large research group.

Now I hope it is not debasing the word to say that these three kinds of language in all their manipulations are part of the collective *creative* act of research and development. They bridge the span from the private intuition to the social use and constitute an intricate network of communication. A student moving into the industrial picture must, then, find his proper place in the spectrum of capability, linguistic and otherwise. Just how, it should be asked, do we in the universities prepare him for this situation? To what extent do rules of grammar and outlines of report forms give a student insight into the inner process of language? Lee Deighton asks himself essentially these questions in a recent article in *ETC.* and comes up with

<sup>12</sup> "Words, Words, Words," *Endeavour*, XII (January, 1953), 4.

the answer "not at all."<sup>13</sup> And he suggests that teachers of English occupy themselves more usefully.

Scientists themselves are notably conservative in their attitude toward the language. They will often insist that the word *data* is inflexibly plural; they perpetuate the fetish of the passive, when it distorts the fluidity of a statement unmercifully. So it often goes also with those who teach English in the scientific milieu, adhering to a past system, mesmerized or numbed by shop-worn grading notations. Frequently enough a piece of verbal repetition is branded *redundant*, when it serves a real function. As a recent study of communications observes, "repetition reduces errors by making some sequences of symbols more likely than others."<sup>14</sup> And, of course, one still encounters inflexibility over many constructions, in spite of the new linguistic relativism which has done so much to reform the teaching of English.

The language has been liberated to a degree, but to what end? How should language be taught to insure the development of the creative engineer? As meaning and logic, I should say, rather than as parts of speech and sets of rules. Teach the engineering student to organize his thoughts logically, and his words will organize themselves into structurally clear sentences and paragraphs. Perhaps he will make minor grammatical blunders which the traditional English course would, ideally, have insured him against, but these may be compared to social errors, like eating with a knife, regrettable aesthetically but insignificant otherwise.

To accompany such an approach to

<sup>13</sup> "The Survival of the English Teacher," *ETC.: A Review of General Semantics*, X (winter, 1953), 97-106.

<sup>14</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

language, however, there must be a new philosophy within the field of engineering, a new methodology which H. J. Masson calls for in his article, "An Outline of Certain Processes of Reasoning in Research," in the March issue of the *Journal of Engineering Education*. "What is needed," Masson writes, "is a disciplinary and directive philosophy of substantial values," and in outlining such an operative technique he marks the intervals at which language is of strategic importance.<sup>15</sup>

Research in the field of logic points the way to a new classification of the dimensions of language which will, I believe, revolutionize language pedagogy. The classification, outlined and developed by Charles Morris,<sup>16</sup> is a part of his concept of the *semiotic*, or the science of signs, and is widely accepted by logicians.<sup>17</sup> According to its framework, language is threefold, consisting of (1) the *semantic*, or that dimension which has to do with the word and the thing it stands for; (2) the *syntactic*, concerned with the relationship between words, or signs; and (3) the *pragmatic*, which deals with the relationship between sign and interpreter, that person for whom the sign has use. Here is a classification based, not on structure, but on function, which will serve as a new and sharper analytic tool. The engineer whose language training has been based on such a classification will be less subject to the frustration many now feel when they attempt to put their ideas into words. He will find language an ally to his thought-processes

<sup>15</sup> *Journal of Engineering Education*, XLIII (March, 1953), 410-19.

<sup>16</sup> *Foundation of the Theory of Signs* ("International Encyclopedia of Unified Science," Vol. I, No. 2 [Chicago, 1938]).

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., R. Carnap, *Foundations of Logic and Mathematics* ("International Encyclopedia of Unified Science," Vol. I, No. 3 [Chicago, 1939]), p. 4.

instead of an enemy to batter into submission.

Obviously, the semantic dimension has particular bearing on the gestative part of industrial research where the scientist is looking for adequate signs to convey his observations. The pragmatic is much more important on the organizational level and of great but less intellectual concern in dissemination. And so on. Of course the three dimensions overlap, but it is apparent that certain signs fall naturally into one dimension or the other. Substantives and verbs fall into the area of semantics; such pivotal words as *nevertheless*, *when*, *after*, *as if*, and *since* are syntactic signposts; and some meliorative and pejorative signs like *fortunate-ly*, *indifferently*, and *it might appear* belong chiefly to pragmatics, since they are devices of emotional coloring. Don't say "Indications were given which lead us to believe that the brick is unsuitable," advises the Du Pont style manual; say, instead, "The brick is unsuitable."<sup>18</sup> But is this terseness really advisable? As semantic representation perhaps, but not necessarily on the syntactic and pragmatic levels. There is a middle ground. Again, how shall we choose among the following directive forms: "Certain areas of research are suggested"; "It is obvious that these operational problems must be met"; "The Joe Doakes Company demands that we . . ." And so on. Pragmatic distinctions are obvious. We ought ideally to apply this threefold analysis to other industrial communications, but time does not permit.

Let me say merely this. Semantics, largely through the agency of S. I. Hayakawa,<sup>19</sup> has done much to alter and invigorate the character of English

teaching on the freshman and sophomore level; such books as Max Black's *Critical Thinking*<sup>20</sup> and Monroe Beardsley's *Thinking Straight*<sup>21</sup> have brought logic out of the rarefied atmosphere of philosophy. Two of the dimensions I have outlined have been dealt with in a measure, and the third, the pragmatic, is implicit in both of them. But what is wanted—terribly wanted—is a book that applies, in the simplest possible terms, this three-dimensional analysis to the language of industrial science. I wish I could tell you that I am writing just such a book. I wish I could tell you that I intend to write it. I am merely asking that somebody write it. We must have—and the sooner the better—a book that introduces the young engineer to the logic of science, at the same time showing him how language serves its dictates. Where would it fit into the curriculum? In the course in technical report-writing, which is so often the repository for cut-and-dried materials and the leftovers of grammar. I do not exclude the possibility that much has already been done toward this end, but I suggest that eventually every college and university will have a course in "The Language of Science" or "The Logic of Science"—not, with due respect to Karl Pearson, "The Grammar of Science." And from such a course, though explicitly nonhistorical, a philosophy of practical science should emerge. Let me suggest, with Charles Morris, that this new science of signs ought to form "a regular part of the equipment of the scientist," that it will enable him to "free himself from the web of words which he has spun," that it may even, as its proponents maintain, accomplish a unification of the sciences.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Instruction for the Preparation of Engineering Department Reports* (Wilmington, Del.: E. I. Du Pont de Nemours & Co., 1948), Exhibit H-1.

<sup>19</sup> *Language in Thought and Action* (New York, 1949).

<sup>20</sup> New York, 1946.

<sup>21</sup> New York, 1950.

<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 2, 3, 57. For a fuller exposition of semiotic see *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (New York, 1946).

It will be some time before the engineer receives such training in language and logic as will prepare him for the complex industrial situation. Time does not stop on the university campus, but it moves with measured tread. Surely industry can be more insistent on the need for high communication standards than it has been in past years. One researcher has outlined a semantic approach to the general physics laboratory,<sup>23</sup> and an engineer-writer has urged the importance of semantics and syntax in technical reports;<sup>24</sup> but these are two small cries in the wilderness of mass communication. Industry must make its

<sup>23</sup> A. Longacre, "A Semantic Approach to the General Physics Laboratory," *American Journal of Physics*, XVII (1949), 413-17.

wants known. It is discouraging to hear from one university placement officer that "the student who is trained to think in words, who can write, who has interest in and some understanding of our complicated world gets the impression he is just about useless to industry."<sup>25</sup> Let us hope that this is the isolated complaint of one frustrated administrator at the fag-end of a day. For industry and education need to join in making language, in its fullest sense, contributory to a creative science.

<sup>24</sup> H. B. Michaelson, "Semantics and Syntax in Technical Reports," *Chemical and Engineering News*, XXVIII (July 17, 1950), 2416-18.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in "Should a Businessman Be Educated?" *Fortune*, April, 1953, p. 114.

## Symposium: Controversial Subjects in the Classroom

*Last spring the editors of College English invited its readers to contribute their opinions on several controversial topics related to the teaching of English. One of those suggested as needing open discussion was "Should controversial subjects—for example, communism—be discussed in either literature or communication classes?" Varied answers to this question are presented in the symposium which follows.*

### I

Oh wad some power the giftie gie us  
To see ousrels as others see us!  
It would frae monie a blunder free us  
An' foolish notion.

ROBERT BURNS

COLLEGE teachers, among others, have received the gift that Burns despaired of. There is a microphone hidden in the ivy that clings to the ivory tower, and the professional vivisectionists at the other end of the wire are not long in interpreting what they hear. The revelations are as startling to college teachers as a trip through the hall of mirrors at a carnival funhouse.

It is well that we examine our blunders

and foolish notions before the inspectors come tapping at our door some night. Our chief blunder seems to be—according to others' views of us—that we have tried to do more than our share. It is our duty to instruct tender minds in the manipulation of alphabetic symbols for reading and writing. More than that we must not do. Our foolish notion that we should train these tender minds to think with the aid of the symbols is a dangerous misconception that we had better get rid of.

Keeping students from thinking may be much more difficult than training them to think. But it is not impossible. We have labored under the misapprehension that words mean something—or

*ought* to—yet that is not necessarily so. Some successful people have learned how to talk and write without conveying ideas. There is no reason why English teachers cannot teach their students this intellectual bead-stringing.

As I have said, our task is difficult. It will become not only difficult but impossible if we do not eliminate controversial matter from our classrooms. As a step in this direction, I advocate a radical revision of the books of essays we use in freshman composition classes. Our goal should be an entirely aseptic collection of essays. Before publication, the proposed table of contents should be submitted to all amateur and professional censor groups. It might be well to bind the book loose-leaf so that essays may be torn out and burned if later found objectionable.

As to what the volume should include, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are a safe bet, since they have not yet been found to be un-American. Articles on baseball, apple pie, and Mother would probably be satisfactory. Of course, anything related to sex, religion, business, education, politics, and other vital aspects of life is definitely out.

At first I found it difficult to view English as a sort of handicraft subject, but a young lady majoring in physical education put me in my place. In a theme she described her recent experience as a counselor at an in-school camp for children. She told how the children were taken at night to view the stars and thus learn of "their place in the universe." Since I read that theme I have been content to go humbly about my business of teaching word-manipulation. Deep questions and controversial matters I leave in the capable hands of muscular maidens in the moonlight.

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## II

Every college composition teacher who, after examining his students' first themes, asks what they did in previous English classes, must, I suspect, have thought: "What lengths high school teachers will go to to avoid teaching composition!"

Similarly, before deciding whether to discuss controversial subjects like communism, we should ask ourselves whether we would discuss them to *avoid* teaching composition or as a *means* to teaching it.

The first idea is doubly appealing. Not only could we attract innumerable students with large signs advertising "Defeat communism in three easy lessons," but, in addition, many of us would rather teach practically anything other than the extremely difficult subject of composition.

But one excellence is not another. And the particular excellence we are expected to develop is writing skill, which, while it may not sound enthralling, still has its own significance.

Under certain circumstances, a subject like communism can be a valid means to teaching writing. But whether it is the best means in a particular class depends on several conditions, including the following.

1. *The teacher.*—Is the subject one in which he is most fitted to lead a penetrating discussion? No one person can master all fields of knowledge, and, since any competent instructor is capable of discussing many worth-while subjects, it would seem unfair to both teacher and students to expect him to master each week whatever new subjects strike the fancy of the syllabus-preparers.

2. *The class.*—Students differ in both capabilities and interests. While it may be true that we should direct their interests in the proper channels, the particular subjects we use to so direct them

should depend in part on what they are capable of doing and what will actually direct those interests. For example, a first theme of the year on "What Culture Means to Me" assigned to a freshman business administration class will almost certainly be a waste of time.

3. *Emotional involvement.*—One danger in discussing a subject like communism is that the students may display considerable fervent patriotism but little logic. Thus the very importance of a subject can argue against its use if the teacher cannot get the students to subordinate their emotions to their reason. While this is a problem in all education, it is particularly worth considering in a class where the student does the bulk of his work—the writing—out of class and where the topic is but a means to the end of improved writing skill.

4. *Sufficient time.*—College freshmen like nothing better than "becoming acquainted" with numerous subjects without penetrating any of them. Little intellectual activity is required in "becoming acquainted." College freshmen as a group are not yet scholars; if we do not provide sufficient discussion time to insure that they penetrate complicated problems, they will become intellectual butterflies, flitting contentedly from communism to art to the nature of man, acquiring only hazy notions and glittering generalities.

5. *Limited enough for themes.*—If the subject is used for a theme, can topics sufficiently limited, yet significant, be drawn from it? Freshmen seem to have an innate desire to be profound, particularly in argumentative writing. They need only a reasonably broad topic before they are off to solving all the world's ills with generalization after generalization. Their desire for profundity may be admirable, but their undisciplined attempts at writing profoundly seldom are.

If these conditions are favorable, controversial subjects can help by stimulating students' intellects and their desire to write. Further, better writing means not only using prettier sentences but also being able to communicate more difficult subjects. Controversial subjects can well be those more difficult subjects.

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### III

Why do "challenging" questions sometimes fail to stir the students? I am not sure that I know why, but I have found an approach that works for me and may work for other teachers too.

I suspect that students often feign boredom from fear: they are afraid of questions that are too direct, and so they retreat into a protective nonchalance or into the safety of clichés. They are not afraid to bring up controversial topics, however, on their own motion, possibly because they do not have to worry about the "teacher's beliefs" in such a case. Whatever the cause may be, I have found that an intentionally sloppy paragraph, about which the student may comment in whole or in part, is more successful than a rigidly assigned topic.

Let me give an example of a paragraph I concocted:

Philip Wylie has said something to the effect that the American mother is the most boring, and consequently the most bored, creature on earth. She is interested in dominating her son and in urging her husband to earn more money. Only in America could so nauseating a custom as Mother's Day become established. Congress should pass a resolution: Mom is a jerk.

There is a paragraph which is extremely iconoclastic to freshmen. Mother is sacred, and to attack Mother is to involve the students' emotions; and yet, because the paragraph rambles, the attack is diffuse, thus provoking a variety

of responses. One girl said, "That is typical of the male attitude." A boy admitted, "Maybe I'm the jerk, but I used to agree with what's on the board. I can remember. . ." A sober little sketch began, "Mother's Day was started by the churches. . ." And one student spluttered, "If I ever heard a guy say that, I'd lay one on him so he'd be out for thirty minutes."

Let me point out, in passing, the range of usage. Colloquial, or even vulgar English, if it represents the student's real level, can be improved much more easily than stilted "freshmanese." Without exception, the students seemed to be writing from genuine interest; most of them showed distinct improvement, and many of them emerged with a distinctive style. Above all—from my point of view—the themes were interesting to read.

None of these subjects, if required, would prove provocative, in my opinion. In fact, I would never even think of assigning "Why I Resent the Opposite Sex." I have grave doubts about the efficacy of "The Day I Disliked Mother." For most students, "A History of Mother's Day" would be fatally dull.

Another paragraph which I found successful is this:

People who work hard will rise to the top in business and will earn a lot of money. Poor people are stupid or lazy or both. Wealth and intelligence go together. Intelligent people should have more power. In fact, we'd be a lot better off if we didn't worry about poor people so much. The right to vote and the right to hold office should be restricted to people who have an I.Q. of at least 140.

Here again are live topics; here again is a paragraph that rambles and permits students to find their own subjects. Some wrote about personal experiences on jobs; others selected more general subjects—an attack upon Social Security, an argument against racial prejudice.

I do not believe that these paragraphs can be solemnized into a "method." Any approach can degenerate into a boring routine, but upon occasion teachers may find that similar paragraphs will permit students to write more freely.

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#### IV

The teaching and discussion of controversial subjects in literature or in communication classes can be objected to on only two counts: (1) these subjects, or ideas, are not literature, and (2) these subjects, or ideas, cannot be taught successfully. I can answer the first objection simply by stating that literature is certainly only one half of the expression of ideas and that the other half is made up of the ideas themselves. The second objection is hardly any better, since it implies a defeatist attitude. Surely educators must believe that anything can be taught, or they would not be educators. However, the term "controversial" seems to strike a special fear into some hearts.

It is said that a controversial topic leads inevitably to impassioned and illogical discussion, to a battle of prejudices which can, in turn, lead only to trouble. These, I think, are precisely the reasons for making a special effort to tackle the problem in our literature and communication classes. Impassioned writing is at once the student's best and worst writing; it is genuine but usually lacking in logic. The teacher is provided with a wonderful opportunity for tempering passionate prejudice with logic, while retaining the authentic feeling and "drive" which almost always accompany the discussion of controversial subjects. Moreover, the teacher can promote new

thinking on the subject, striving to eliminate the dangerous practice of maintaining old beliefs without fresh investigation. Most of us tend to adopt a fixed position on controversial subjects, to become prejudiced and hold an opinion without an adequate basis.

If the discussion does nothing more than accurately define the subject, it has served a worth-while purpose. I asked forty-five students in Freshman English to define "communism," distinguishing between theoretical communism and practical communism. Only one student gave a satisfactory answer; the others were forced to realize that when they denounced communism they didn't even know what they were objecting to.

We then proceeded to study the historical development of the Communist party in Russia, paying particular attention to the world conditions which seemed to be directly related to the "success" of the party. We finished our study by reading *The God That Failed*, edited by Richard Crossman and published by Harper and Brothers in 1950. The book is available in a twenty-five-cent Bantam edition, so that each student could have his own copy of the book. To quote from the back cover of the book, "Six world-famous writers tell why they once believed in Communism and why they broke away from it." This shows that we could study a problem which is controversial, political, and literally red-hot and at the same time read six world-famous writers!

Finally, our discussion of a controversial subject illustrated vividly to the students that freedom of education and ideas is not merely theoretical but is workable and real.

JOHN MILTON

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## V

Should controversial subjects, such as communism, be presented in college literature and communication classes? The answer to this question should, I believe, become apparent if we decide, first, whether controversial questions should be a part of education at all and then examine our objectives in both literature and communication classes to see in what way the answer to our first question helps us to meet those objectives.

There are many, perhaps an alarming number, of teachers who would answer our first question—Should controversial issues be a part of education?—in the negative. Perhaps they are afraid, as they have reason to be, of the possible repercussions of stating an honest, albeit unpopular, view. Perhaps, however, it is no part of their philosophy to consider any question really unsettled; they may feel that what is needed is to teach "the truth." "Truth," to them, is not a matter of debate; it is to be found in "tradition" as they interpret tradition and involves the Parmenidean belief that reality is essentially timeless and unchanging, that truth is absolute for all times and places, and that we need only discover it. Such a view is authoritarian; it sees the answers to educational problems in the acceptance of authority—perhaps Plato, perhaps Thomas Aquinas, perhaps (even) Hitler.

Also, such a view is not scientific, for it does not set up its hypotheses tentatively or look upon truth as something still to be found. Its error seems to me to be in assimilating empirical truth to logical truth and in overemphasizing the importance of the latter. Whether I am right or wrong about this, however, is a matter for philosophers to discuss; the

main question is, "Does the concept of an American democratic education leave room for such an authoritarian view?" Here the answer seems obvious: if authoritarianism were compatible with democracy, our Constitution would have no need for checks and balances, our political arena could be served by one party only, and the three branches of our government could be put together under one head. It seems to many of us, of course, that "democracy" is contradicted in principle when it is thus interpreted. We would say that, to be scientific as well as democratic, we must allow for the possible rightness of many conflicting opinions. Furthermore, we would insist on the free flow of all opinions in our schools so as to make qualified citizens of a democratic state.

Now what are our objectives in communication classes? It is true that usually we teach grammar, spelling, punctuation, and the technique of making an effective speech. We also teach outlining and proper organization. But these things are only means to the ends we pursue. Our main objectives, I believe, are, first, to encourage independent thinking and, second, to encourage effective communication of such thought. What better subjects, I ask, can be found than controversial ones for meeting these objectives? In what better way can we estimate the student's grasp of his facts and the validity of his logical deductions than by using subjects which admit of the presentation of a point of view with which some of us will disagree? It is in controversy that the mind is whetted; it learns quickly that, to defend a point, it must be careful to gather all necessary data and present it carefully.

Many teachers will agree with me about the importance of presenting controversial subjects in communication

classes but will hold that literature classes are no place for such debate. I would like to remind them, however, that the place of a T. S. Eliot or a Theodore Dreiser in American literature is a matter of debate and that scholars have in no way agreed on these controversial figures. Of course, such a point may no doubt be admitted; the main question centers in controversial social and political issues, such as communism and fascism, or around religious questions, such as Calvinism and Unitarianism and transcendentalism. I must confess that I find it impossible personally to teach literature without introducing these issues when the writer under discussion introduces them. To me, literary values are social values and historical values as well as aesthetic values. One could, I will admit, limit his presentation of literature to works of art and to writers whose appeal is mainly aesthetic—but, if he does, he ignores much of the greatest in literature. He could, also, attempt a purely aesthetic point of view toward all literature, but to do so is to accuse many writers of not doing what they did not set out to do. And this brings us back to the question of authoritarianism: by what right do we, as teachers, arbitrarily set aside from our courses in literature anything which does not contain purely aesthetic values? By what right do we ignore or underrate artists who attempt to "teach" as well as to "delight"? Surely such decisions are made not on empirical evidence or scientific study but only on an appeal to "authority." And have we not already decided that such an appeal has no place in a democratic state?

ROBERT PALMER SAALBACH

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## *Round Table*

### CONVERSING IN THE MARGINS

Although my freshmen seem genuinely interested in my thumbnail sketch of logic and my collection of fallacies culled from the newspapers, their first arguments and essays of opinion are the most insufferable flapdoodle imaginable. For all the variety in the quality of the mechanics and style, these themes are much alike in their argumentative inanity. With oracular pomposity the opening sentence announces what we may charitably call the proposition, often some popular fallacy or mass-produced dogma from the high priests of the press, radio, and television. Two feeble little examples and a lazy "etc." or a hypothetical case convert this notion into a "proven fact." Labored repetition of the notion and a few irrelevancies pad out the theme to the required length, the last variation being prefaced by the inevitable, the weighty (or at least heavy) "in conclusion, let me state."

My students are rather taken aback when they read my comments on their "proven facts," comments which often quite fill up the margins and other white space at my disposal. When I return the themes, hands go up over pained faces, and injured innocence makes itself heard.

"Aren't you supposed to stick to the grammar and punctuation and that sort of thing and not bother about what we say, the—er—content of our themes?"

"I had only one error in spelling and three in punctuation. What do you mark on?" (He means, "Why didn't I get an *A* or a *B*?"

"Do we have to agree with you? That doesn't seem . . ."

I must justify my extensive commentary, explain why I have seen fit to stray from such textbook concerns as diction, spelling,

punctuation, sentence structure, and organization. With some warmth I protest that I am not a theme-reading machine, a new marvel of electronics grading for grammar. Though it may be hard to credit, I am a real human being, and so I am naturally interested in what my students say in their themes, just as I am interested in what they say in those discussions we have out in the corridor by the "No Smoking" sign. As a matter of fact, don't my marginal remarks sound something like my remarks in the lively give-and-take of those corridor discussions? The search for truth, I suggest, is a co-operative venture; no idea is so perfect that it will not profit from some brisk opposition. Indeed, many of my criticisms are merely summaries of objections offered by their own classmates when the themes were read in class.

No, they don't have to agree with me on controversial issues to get a good grade. When they know me better, they will learn that I like nothing better than a vigorous and resourceful assault upon my own beliefs. What I want is well-considered opinion supported by a good deal of actual evidence, not muddled nonsense, vague generalities, and pompous vaporizing. If some confirmed relativist murmurs, "Who's to judge?" I calmly insist that it is my responsibility to determine what is claptrap and to give my reasons for thinking so. My former students, I say, have told me that I am being helpful when I uncover dubious assumptions, suggest new evidence, and offer different perspectives.

I doubt that my students have cause to consider me dogmatic or dictatorial. The young conservative in domestic relations who writes that "because of biological differences" woman's place is you-know-where is not crushed, I suppose, by my

marginal remonstrance, "I know a man can't have babies, but do you mean that a woman's hand fits a broom better than a man's does?" The athlete pontificating on the transcendent value of competitive sports and declaring that "in these sports our youth may learn competition," is probably not browbeaten when I query, "Do we have to *learn* this virtue? Seems to me it is standard equipment in human nature." If the Fourth of July orator implies that ours is the only democratic nation in the world, surely no harm is done by my asking, "Did England, France, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, etc., drop behind the Iron Curtain last night?" The cheery optimist who thinks that some grave social problem will be "conquered" as soon as "the people have been educated on this matter" and that "time will tell" what the solution is to be ought to be able to bear up under my retort that publicity campaigns are no substitute for hard thinking and hard work, that time tells only whether men have thought and worked wisely. I shall even be so bold as to suggest that those complacent souls who harangue the class and me on the "highest standard of living in the world" might well benefit from some such gentle expostulation as, "Must we be so smug about this? As the Psalmist says, 'If riches increase, set not your heart thereon.'"

But I am anxious that my running criticism of what the student is saying—or trying to say—should not undermine his self-confidence. For this reason, I make sure that I am generous with my praise. I always let him know when something in his theme pleases me, even when I suspect that it is a lucky hit. It may not be dignified, but I cheer him on as though he were learning to walk or talk; I pepper the margins with such kudos as "Good," "Good point," "Nicely put," "Wonderful," "Bravo." At the bottom of every theme, after a succinct summary of the major difficulties of style and mechanics, I write a compliment. Usually I can find some sort of merit. Perhaps the ideas are sensible, so far as I can com-

prehend them. Good hard thinking, though it is expressed in an awkward manner, may deserve such recognition as "Thoughtful" or "Shows careful consideration." If the thought is shoddy, close attention to mechanics and a smooth, natural style may be worth favorable notice. If the thought is shoddy and the expression uncouth, charity may prompt me to discover that the subject is a promising one!

By the end of the term my students are actually looking forward to reading my marginalia. They huddle over the returned themes, chuckling over my more sprightly responses. Sometimes they tell me that they "get a charge out of" my criticisms. The tribute is not very elegant, but it seems to indicate that I have engaged their interest.

Admittedly an extensive, dramatic commentary on argumentative themes makes very exacting demands on the instructor. Ideally he should be well grounded in all the arts and all the sciences. Certainly he should be strong in the dialectic virtues—patience, courtesy, charity, and humility. But, however imperfectly he measures up to these requirements, he will be doing his students a real service if he takes the time and the trouble to criticize their ideas kindly but trenchantly. Freshmen will write spirited, cogent arguments and essays of opinion if the instructor will converse in the margins.

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#### GRADING FOR CONTENT

A problem which often troubles the beginning instructor is the question of criticizing the ideas in student papers and of the extent to which the quality of the ideas is to be considered in grading.

It seems hard to expect a teacher to let unreasonable ideas or inaccurate facts go unchallenged. To do so is to encourage negligence in the student and to behave as if there were two utterly unrelated standards for judging writing—soundness and

effectiveness. Moreover, if English departments are ever to get help from other departments in enforcing standards of good English, it is hardly fair of them to be indifferent to the content of the writing, which most other departments will be interested in. On the other hand, there is considerable danger involved in criticizing ideas. If there is much of it, both teacher and student may be distracted from their main business; and it may be felt unjust to mark a student down for something which is not the main object of the course, especially if there is any suspicion that his error consists merely in holding an opinion which is different from the instructor's. There is no doubt that the composition class has often been exploited by teachers who had some sort of social philosophy to expound and that students have at least believed that they had to accept the philosophy in order to get a good grade. Whether any intellectual tyranny is involved or not, certainly the atmosphere would not seem conducive to improvement in writing.

It is not easy to solve this problem once and for all, but it might help to use a distinction well known in logic—the distinction between a true conclusion and a valid conclusion in an argument. A valid conclusion is one which follows properly from the premises; it may or may not be true, depending on whether the premises are true. A true conclusion, on the other hand, is one which accords with the facts; it need not have been deduced by valid principles of logic or even have been obtained from true premises. Thus in the argument

All metals are liquids;  
Gold is a metal;  
Gold is a liquid

the conclusion is valid, being validly derived from the premises, even though it does not happen to be true, at least at normal temperatures. On the other hand, in the argument

Some metals are solids;  
Gold is a metal;  
Gold is a solid

though the last sentence happens to be true, it is not a valid conclusion from the premises. To apply this distinction to the criticism and grading of papers, it would be reasonable to say that if the line of thought in the paper is clear and logical, and if the conclusions (if any) follow naturally from the premises on which they are based, then the paper ought not to be graded down because the instructor does not find himself in agreement with the premises or the conclusions. Of course he may be moved to protest against the ideas, but, in so doing, he is speaking no longer as a composition instructor but as a counselor, as an expert in some other field, or as an adherent of some particular view of life; and in certain fields, such as morals and politics, he ought to drop any assumption of pedagogical superiority and argue on a plane of equality, as one private citizen to another. Perhaps it would be just as well not to do even this too often, but to exclude it altogether would be to limit severely the teacher's freedom and usefulness. It goes without saying, of course, that whether the conclusions are acceptable or not, if the line of thinking is confused or illogical, then the paper is in this respect badly written and should be criticized and graded accordingly.

It should not be assumed that this is a distinction which can only be used in judging pieces of argumentation; it is applicable to almost any writing which has any traces of thought or reasoning, though not perhaps to a mere narrative or a "process." Even the simplest kind of exposition—a general statement with illustrations—can be called logical if the illustrations fit and illogical if they do not, though we would not be using the terms in quite the same way that the philosopher does.

A comparable problem is that of evaluating information used to support a conclusion in an essay. If we applied the same principle, we would say that, if the conclusion can properly be deduced from the information, then the paper is acceptable, whether the information is correct or not. I am not so sure, however, that this is such a wise thing

to do. Within limits, we say that everyone is entitled to his own opinion on certain broad questions of life; but we do not recognize the right of anyone to be wrong about obvious matters of fact. Practical considerations may force the composition teacher to be fairly tolerant, especially since in many instances he cannot know, without a lot of troublesome research, whether the facts are right or not; but, where there is obvious carelessness, there is no need for him to be merciful. In certain assignments, such as the research paper, factual inaccuracy could not be tolerated at all.

To sum the matter up, an essay submitted in a composition course is to be regarded primarily as an exercise in writing and is to be criticized and graded accordingly. Bad logic may not, in the strict sense, be an offense against the art of expression, but it is hardly something which a teacher of writing can ignore or excuse. To go beyond this, however, and to try to judge the correctness or acceptability of the ideas is to tread on dangerous ground. In some cases it ought to be done but always with caution and humility.

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#### PUTTING THEME REVISIONS TO WORK

I have long felt that a more profitable use could be made of the revisions that students do as part of their regular theme-writing assignments. Many of us devote considerable time to checking such revisions, often with as much care as we lavish upon the themes themselves. Yet, after checking the corrections, we have no way of really knowing whether or not a student has actually mastered a particular weakness, whether he understands the principle involved in, let us say, pruning a particular paragraph to give it unity, or combining immature sentences through proper subordination. Be that as it may, we can, at all events, get a better return on the investment of time that we make in checking cor-

rections if we exploit the potentially valuable teaching materials which our students provide for us. Let me explain.

I have been collecting and mimeographing samples of student writing illustrating weaknesses such as monotonous sentence structure, improper subordination, lack of coherence, wordiness, and mechanical errors like fragmentary sentences, comma splices, and run-on sentences. The samples, which include both a student's faulty writing and his revisions, range from sentences to full length themes.

In the writing laboratory of our communication skills course, each student receives (1) a copy of the material to be revised. The mimeographed sheet with samples of wordy writing, for instance, contains the following paragraph with its trite comparisons:

As I came shuffling down the third floor corridor of West Mayo Hall, I noticed that my destination, room 395, was unusually quiet. I opened the door and entered a room that is most [sic] always full of laughter and giggling and noticed that the stillness closely resembled that of a morgue. On the top bunk my victim lay with her head propped upon her arms and a book against the bed post.

After completing his rewrite job, each member of the class receives (2) a mimeographed copy of the corrections made by the student from whose writing the sample had originally been taken. The material on wordiness, for example, contains this revision of the paragraph above:

As I came shuffling down the third floor corridor of West Mayo Hall, I noticed that room 395 was unusually quiet. I opened the door and entered a room that is almost always full of laughter. I found it very still. On the top bunk lay Betty, one of my new friends, with her head propped upon her arm and a book against the bed post.

The students now compare the various revisions with the faulty sample and examine the ways in which a particular weakness may be eliminated. The class usually finds this phase of the exercise the most fruitful and stimulating.

The procedure, I think, has several merits over the conventional exercise material in textbooks: (1) The faulty writing and the revisions are readily available to the student for future reference. (2) The samples are taken from the work of fellow-students and therefore have greater immediacy—especially if they contain specific references to phases of campus life—than the exercises usually found in textbooks or workbooks. (3) Most of the samples are revised by students. Although the revisions generally show acceptable English usage, sentence quality, and sentence structure, a number of the corrections can sometimes be effectively improved upon, indicating, if nothing else, that two or even three revisions do not necessarily make a finished piece of writing and that, in any case, there is more than one way in which to revise a sentence or paragraph, depending on the meaning, the emphasis, and the rhythm one wishes to attain in a particular context. (4) Finally, through this type of exercise, the student's attention is focused on the importance of revision as an integral part of the writing process, a phase from which, I am persuaded, he has much to gain. For through frequent and deliberate revisions of his writing he can develop a feeling for sentence structure, for the shades of meanings of words, and for the patterns and rhythms of his native language.

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#### TECHNICAL PAPERS AND ENGLISH TEACHERS

In one of the manila folders in my desk is a file of topics that have been used by students when they have written a technical paper for a course that I teach to upper-classmen. The topics range from highly technical ones, such as "Partition Chromatography and Its Application to the Study of Protein Structure," to less technical ones, such as "Control of the Corn Borer in Minnesota," "Effects of DDT on Wildlife," and "The Diet Problems of Older People."

You might well ask: What business has an instructor in English attempting to teach students to write papers on such topics? Does he understand the subject matter, and, even if he does, can he evaluate it? What, precisely, can he do with this kind of assignment which will be really helpful to his students and worth both their time and his own? Wouldn't it be much better if someone familiar with the subject matter undertook to train students to write papers of this type?

The first two questions can be answered quickly and briefly. Of the five instructors who teach this course in our department all have had more or less traditional training in English; none of us has combined it with special training in science. We frequently do not understand in detail the subject matter of the more technical papers that we read. Even when we do understand it, we do not have the background to give the kind of criticism of the contents that a person trained in that technical subject would give.

What, then, do we attempt to do?

We begin this unit of work by distinguishing between technical, semitechnical, and popular publications. Students are asked to look at the dominating professional or trade journals in the field in which they are specializing and to analyze the contents. They read a few examples of reports on research to observe how an experienced writer introduces, organizes, and presents his materials and the details of citing literature. Technical bulletins are also used as examples of reports written for others who are doing research in the same or in a closely related field. In a land-grant college such as ours technical bulletins are published by the Experiment Station, whereas simplified and popularized material is published by the Extension Service. The distinctions between these branches of the University and the differences in purpose, form, and style between their publications have often not been clarified for the undergraduate. Semitechnical literature, which falls between these two extremes and frequently overlaps them, may be found in some of the professional jour-

nals, in some bulletins and pamphlets, and in many periodicals.

These distinctions between publications on the basis of the reader group tie in naturally with the point of view which is basic in an English course. They lead into a discussion of such topics as the organization of a strictly technical paper as contrasted with a popular one; the adaptation of expository methods to one's type of writing; and, of course, to that topic familiar to all English teachers, levels of usage and appropriateness of style.

A second objective of the course is to acquaint students with library facilities for writing technical papers and with methods of library research. Instructors make the point, when assigning the paper, that every student should know how to find recent and authoritative information on specialized topics. This entails library research. A student should use original reports of research, so far as he is able, instead of articles possibly several times removed from the original source. He will be concerned with both the recency of his information and the qualifications of the person who wrote the report.

To write their technical papers, students have to use the *Agricultural Index*, the *Industrial Arts Index*, or the *Education Index* to find more specialized material than is listed in the *Reader's Guide*. They also have available a nine-year index to *Minnesota Farm and Home Science*, a publication of the University of Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station. We describe and ask them to examine the *Bibliography of Agriculture*, which is the comprehensive index for more advanced research. The discovery of this aid to research can be exciting for a student who is looking forward to graduate work. We point out that much important material appears in government publications and that these are accessible to them through special indexes.

The English teacher can be of considerable help to students in the organization of a technical paper. Outlines for papers that are reports on original research are, for the most part, highly conventional. A basic out-

line for many types of investigation in a college such as ours is the following:

- I. Introduction: nature, scope, and importance of the problem
- II. Review of the literature
- III. Purpose of the present investigation
- IV. Materials and methods of procedure
- V. Experiments and results
- VI. Analysis and interpretation of results
- VII. Summary and conclusions
- VIII. Literature cited

By observing the organization of even a few reports in professional journals and technical bulletins, students become familiar with this basic outline and observe that the headings are combined and adapted to specific purposes and to the length of the report. Our upperclassmen are usually not in a position, however, when they are taking the course, to write an original report on technical data. If they are, we encourage them to do so. For example, some home economics students in experimental cookery happen to take the course at a time when they are writing reports on experiments done in class, and they can make immediate application of the instruction. But for most students the assignment becomes a review of some of the most recent literature on a specific topic that is being investigated and reported upon, and they plan their papers so as to present a summary of their findings as clearly and effectively as possible. The plan may be a narrative summary of recent material; usually, however, it follows a topic organization suggested by the subject matter.

It is to the actual writing of the paper, of course, that an English teacher can make his greatest contribution. Logical, clear, and precise exposition is essential in good report-writing. The more formal processes of exposition, especially the basic processes of definition and analysis, are particularly pertinent to this kind of writing, and students should understand these processes and should develop skill in using them.

The techniques of handling reference material differ somewhat in technical papers as contrasted with those in a more general style, and an English instructor must be

willing to acquaint himself with these. For example, the last name of the person whose research is being summarized or cited is usually stated within the text. The name is followed by a number or a date, in parentheses and not raised from the line of text, which refers the reader to the literature cited. The references are usually given at the end of the report under the heading "Literature Cited." The numbers used within the text to cite literature are usually based upon the alphabetical arrangement of names at the end of the paper and therefore do not appear in the usual sequence. In the "Literature Cited" the listing of references is utilitarian: titles are not put into quotation marks or italics; capital letters are used for only the first word in the title of a book or article, unless of course the word is a proper noun or adjective; abbreviations, if they are standard ones, may be used for the titles of journals. The instructor soon learns, however, that there are many variations in the details of citing literature in the numerous scientific and technical journals. If the student is taught a standard style and is urged to observe the variations made use of in the dominating journal in the field in which he is specializing, all will have been accomplished that is possible in a course where there are students from many different curriculums.

The parts of the completed paper, the division of the report into sections with topic headings, and the appearance of the final manuscript are other aspects of the instruction.

The style of a technical paper is necessarily impersonal and formal, but it need not be dull and undistinguished. Helping a student reduce verbiage, secure variety in his sentence patterns and wording, and handle more complicated constructions than he may have attempted before are some of the aspects of style that an instructor must be competent to handle.

To come now to the last question asked at the beginning of this discussion: Wouldn't it be desirable if someone familiar with the subject matter undertook to train the student to write papers of this type? Ideally, yes,

provided that person also has skill in writing, is interested in it, and is able to teach others how to write.

But the greater part of the training I have been describing comes well within the province of an English teacher. Such training is, in fact, little more than an induction into technical writing, and staff members in the technical departments on our campus seem well pleased to have us do what we are able to do within our department. Apparently most of them consider it good training which saves time for them later, and they think that they have enough to do as it is handling reports in advanced courses and the theses of graduate students. Occasionally an adviser will program a graduate student for the course on a noncredit basis. Two years ago an instructor in veterinary medicine who was writing his Ph.D. thesis became a regularly enrolled student and wrote all the required papers.

It should be made clear that the work on this paper is only one part of a quarter's course, approximately a third of it. The other papers, except for a letter of application, are written for reader groups outside the student's own curriculum. Through these papers we try to train our students to write simple, clear exposition that is interesting to read and has some literary merit.

The combination of technical and popular writing helps a student gauge his own capacities and interests. If he handles the technical paper well, he can probably handle graduate work if he wishes to undertake it. If he has a bent for more popular writing, he can make use of it in the many types of vocations for which students on our campus are being trained.

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#### A BOOK VERSUS MACHINE EXPERIMENT IN ADULT READING IMPROVEMENT<sup>1</sup>

In recent years there has been a growing interest in improving the reading efficiency

<sup>1</sup> This is a condensation of the most significant aspects of research submitted in partial fulfillment of

of mature readers, both college students and adults. One of the major approaches used in improving the reading of these mature people has been through such mechanical aids as the metronoscope, tachistoscope, reading-rate controller, and motion-picture films. Another major approach has been through the use of special books, or manuals, designed to improve reading. Some reading laboratories report outstanding results with their machine-centered programs, and other laboratories report equally outstanding results with their book-centered programs. Some research has been done to compare the effectiveness of these two reading approaches, but results to date have tended to be rather inconclusive. This problem has financial implications which might possibly save the unnecessary expenditure of a considerable amount of money on the part of civilian and military educational institutions. Many such institutions are interested in knowing what equipment they need to set up reading laboratories or to improve the laboratories which they currently have in operation. Most mechanical reading aids used in the machine-centered approach are expensive; for example, the current price of the reading-rate controller, which was used in the experiment to be described in this article, is approximately \$85.00. On the other hand, the manuals or books used in the book-centered approach are relatively inexpensive.

In order to provide some information on this problem of the relative effectiveness of a book-centered approach versus a machine-centered approach in adult reading improvement, an experiment was recently conducted at the Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. The subjects of the experi-

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the requirements for a Ph.D. degree at the University of Southern California. The complete dissertation is available in both manuscript and microfilm at the University of Southern California Library under the following title: *A Comparative Study of a Book-centered Course versus a Machine-centered Course in Adult Reading Improvement*. The views expressed here are those of the author and are not to be construed as reflecting officially or unofficially the policy of the United States Air Force.

ment were 438 students taking a course for junior officers at the Air Command and Staff School of the Air University. These officers came from all parts of the United States; the average age was a little over twenty-nine; the average level of educational attainment was somewhat under two years of college; and the average "Linguistic Score" on the American Council on Education Psychological Examination was approximately at the seventy-second percentile for four-year-college male freshmen.

The study was based on a seven-week experiment repeated three times. The design of each experiment was simple in structure. In essence, it involved a pretest versus post-test evaluation of three independent groups—two experimental and one control—equated on the basis of random selection. Strictly on the basis of random sampling, students were assigned to a machine-centered experimental group, a book-centered experimental group, and a control group which, of course, received no special reading instruction. Students in each of the two experimental groups were given twenty-one fifty-minute periods of reading instruction over a period of seven weeks. In both experimental groups every effort was made to minimize the factor of instructor influence. Neither course involved any extensive lectures by an instructor, and neither course involved any instructor-led class discussion. After the initial orientation hour in each course, the instructor played only a monitor role. In both courses students were given their daily assignments and instructions through specially prepared student notebooks.

The book-centered course was devoted entirely to reading and working exercises in *How To Read Better and Faster*, by Norman Lewis (rev. ed.; New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1951). The machine-centered course was oriented around the reading-rate controller, manufactured by the Three Dimension Company, Chicago, Illinois. This equipment was simply a "pacing machine," using an opaque drop shutter<sup>2</sup> which de-

<sup>2</sup>The machine was originally designed so that books had to be taken apart at the binding in order

scended over the page of a book, forcing the eyes to read ahead of the moving cover; the rate of descent was accurately controlled by a dial mechanism.

The objective instrument used to evaluate student progress in reading was the Harvard University Reading Course Test, prepared by William G. Perry, Jr., and Charles P. Whitlock of the Bureau of Study Counsel, Harvard University, in late 1948. The test was used to measure two major aspects of reading—speed and comprehension.

The most significant results obtained in this experiment were in the area of speed. Here it was found that, as measured by the Harvard Reading Test, both of the experimental groups improved significantly over the control group. Moreover, book-centered instruction resulted in reading speeds that were significantly higher than speeds attained by machine-centered instruction. To be specific, the book course achieved an average speed of approximately 50 words per minute faster than the machine course and approximately 108 words per minute faster than the control group. The machine course achieved an average speed of approximately 58 words per minute faster than the control group.

With respect to comprehension, results were generally negative; it was found that, as measured by the Harvard Reading Test, there were no significant comprehension differences between either experimental group and the control group. All groups tended to remain about the same in compre-

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to be read one page at a time in the machine. In order to avoid taking books apart in this way, the machines used in the experiment were modified by attaching a metal rod to the bottom of the shutter in such a way that the rod extended eleven inches to the left and swept down over an open book placed on an improvised wooden reading rack to the left of the machine. In general, the opaque shutter was used in reading special exercises; the rod attachment was used in reading books.

hension. These results, of course, indicate that further research is needed to (1) improve the comprehension aspects of both the book and machine course or (2) find a measuring instrument which is able to measure more precisely the improvement in comprehension which might possibly be taking place in either or both of the courses. In spite of these negative results with respect to comprehension, however, it is worth noting that both of the experimental groups significantly increased their speed *without significant loss in comprehension*.

The results in favor of book-centered instruction with respect to speed are encouraging to individuals who wish to improve their reading speed with a minimum of time and expense, as well as to reading laboratories operating a short reading course and not having enough money to invest in reading machines. At this point, however, fairness to the machine-centered approach makes it wise to emphasize the shortness of the twenty-one-hour course used in this experiment. It is reasonable to suppose that subjects in a machine-centered course may devote considerable time, first, to getting accustomed to a reading machine, and, second, to "weaning" themselves away from the machine before the end of the course. This may well mean that a machine-centered course requires an allocation of more time than twenty-one hours. With a few more hours a machine course might show up considerably better. Toward this end the machine-centered program at the Air Command and Staff School Reading Laboratory is now being experimentally lengthened to see whether greater gains might be derived from the longer course.

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### REMEDIAL ENGLISH WITHOUT STUDENT RESENTMENT

One of the greatest disadvantages to the noncredit remedial English course is the resentment which the student feels toward the course. Not only does the student feel penalized by having to take a course which is just as difficult as the one taken for credit by his fellow-students, but he faces, as an already bewildered freshman, the problem of someday making up the lost credit in order to graduate on schedule.

The English Department at Bessie Tift College for Women felt that the problem of student resentment was important enough to warrant action. A plan was devised whereby the students take remedial English in conjunction with the regular course in English. Those students whose placement tests indicated a need for remedial English were enrolled in a regular freshman English class, and, in addition, they were enrolled in a remedial course for three hours a week. In the remedial classes special emphasis was placed on grammar and on reading skills. Opportunity was also given for the students to ask specific questions about materials not fully understood in the regular freshman English course.

The results were excellent. Instead of resenting the remedial English, the students felt that they were receiving a special favor from the English Department. Under the new system, only one student received the mark of "F" in the freshman English course. A test was given to the students at the end of the first quarter of their work, and the percentile norm scores (based on national test grades) improved on the average of 19.6 points.

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### A NOTE ON EUDORA WELTY'S THE PONDER HEART

Enjoyment of Eudora Welty's recently published novel, *The Ponder Heart*, may be

enhanced by an explanation of the literary allusion in the name of its garrulous narrator, Edna Earle Ponder.

What sounds like just another of the alliterative double names bestowed upon the flower of Southern womanhood really honors the heroine of the best-selling sentimental novel *St. Elmo*, by Augusta Evans Wilson. Miss Welty has ample justification for adapting the name (Edna Earl in the original), since not only many girls, but even towns (e.g., in Alabama and Illinois) were named after either the novel or the young woman. Miss Welty is too perspicacious to have used the name coincidentally, without an implied reference to its source.

The name adds relish to the book not only because it recalls the popular tale but because it adds to our understanding of the writer's concept of the Ponder family. *St. Elmo* epitomized sentimental decadence. When its heroine is asked by her long-suffering lover (for whom the book is titled) if she is "more righteous than the Lord she worships," she grants she is not but indicates that she is at least equally virtuous. Her repulsively squeamish propriety appealed to those bent on denying that man has any natural instincts mentionable in polite society. It is noteworthy that, despite offers, Miss Welty's narrator is unmarried; ironic that she tells her captive audience, "if you read, you'll put your eyes out," since the woman she is named for personifies feminine erudition. We learn, in addition to all Miss Welty tells us about the Ponders, that they were the kind of people who would have been sympathetic enough with this pious nonsense to borrow the heroine's name for their daughter.

A discussion of the plot and popularity of *St. Elmo* may be found in Edna Cain Daniel's article in the *Georgia Review* for winter, 1953.

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

## *Letters to the Editor*

*To the Editors of "College English":*

*College English* customarily distinguishes itself, but one recent article, Oscar Cargill's "Poetry since the Deluge," annoys me. I resent such assertions as, "Pound has begun to be written off as a mere virtuoso, MacLeish as a rhetorician, and Hart Crane as an unintegrated ineffectual." Is Mr. Cargill the keeper of the diptychs? If not, just who is responsible for this offhand summary treatment?

The creators of literature endure enough without having to put up with such arbitrary anathematizing. Pound, MacLeish, and Crane are, after all, *poets*. Let Cargill, or whoever it is, substantiate his assertions or step back into the shadows where he presently seems to belong.

Let me make another point. Anyone at all who has observed modern literary trends knows, of course, that for the last ten or more years we have been enjoying a "new classicism" in poetry. "There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave to tell us this."

CLINTON F. LARSON

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

*To the Editors of "College English":*

I read Mr. Cargill's article with interest, and I would like to voice some of the thoughts it set in motion.

It occurred to me that many editors, critics, and readers, in reacting to "contemporary" poetry, are in danger of judging works by new poets good only in so far as they conform to traditional verse and rhythm patterns. In my opinion, the wonderful innovations begun by Dada and early surrealism must not be discarded now as fads in favor of a classical reaction. They showed us how poetry could use its medium

—words—in new combinations, and they taught us how to break the rigidity that much poetic experience had become. Mallarmé's "Coup de dés," written in ideograms and various sizes and shapes of type, an early "experiment," remains today one of the greatest poems in any language. I fear that even E. E. Cummings would have difficulty in placing his work in many American literary magazines today.

The poems of Apollinaire, Éluard, Tzara, and Larbaud, to name a few, are not historical relics. They are rich in unusual word, image, and rhythm patterns. Young poets, for fear of being called "experimental," "obscure," even (ludicrously) "old-fashioned," instead of carrying on from what they have learned from the above poets, are reverting to tradition, only so that their work will be accepted.

Let us not lose by lack of vision what we have learned from those who had great insight and invention and who thereby enriched our literature. Let us not go backward.

DAISY AIDAN MILLER

NEW YORK, N.Y.

*To the Editors of "College English":*

Two articles in the January issue of *College English* present statistics drawn from the test-retest use of the Diagnostic Reading Tests. Since these tests have been widely used, and since important decisions concerning the value of college developmental reading programs may be based upon the results they show, a word of criticism may be salutary.

The tests purport to measure speed and comprehension. Their before-and-after-training scores usually show relatively high gains in speed and relatively low gains, or none, in comprehension. These scores are

often interpreted to mean that instruction in reading increases speed but has only a negligible effect on comprehension.

Actually, the second part of that interpretation may be in error. The tests simply don't measure comprehension satisfactorily. If used as instruments for revealing changes in ability to comprehend, they probably confuse or mislead more than they inform.

To be specific: In Part 1, "General Reading," an important variable, time, is changed. The student reads a selection in, say, six minutes and makes a score of fifteen out of twenty questions correct. At the end of the semester he reads a comparable selection in four minutes and again gets fifteen answers right. Has he increased his comprehension, kept it the same, or lowered it? Proponents of reading instruction might say he has increased it by 50 per cent, since the speed or rate of comprehension has increased by that amount; or, more probably, they would argue that he has kept it the same, meaning that he has learned to read as understandingly at a fast rate as he formerly read at a slow one. Opponents of the instruction would probably argue that speed is of less importance than comprehension and that a gain in the one by no means implies a gain in the other; and they might even maintain, perhaps not entirely with tongue in cheek, that the student has lowered his comprehension, reasoning that, since the course of instruction includes a large number of objective-type reading quizzes, the student has increased his skill at taking tests sufficiently to offset a real decrease in comprehension at the higher speeds.

Exactly what the score means, in relation to comprehension *per se*, is impossible to determine.

Part 2, the vocabulary section, is uniformly timed, but in such a way that most students fail to complete it either at the beginning or at the end of the semester. Thus their scores are again difficult to inter-

pret; they refer partly to speed, partly to knowledge of words. Gains shown, if any, ought probably to be attributed more to increases in speed than to increases in vocabulary. Further, even if the section were a "power" test of vocabulary, it would show only knowledge of words rather than ability to comprehend passages of writing. Doubtless there is a correlation between the two. But what precisely is it?

Part 3, the comprehension section, is uniformly timed and comes much closer than either of the other two to being a valid measure of comprehension. However, as the tests were designed for a range from seventh grade through college freshman classes, the selections fail to provide adequate challenge for relatively mature readers, and the scores obtained at the beginning of the semester are so high that there is little room for improvement at the end. (This criticism is equally true of Part 1.)

To sum up: It can safely be said that college developmental reading programs definitely increase speed. It cannot be said—or at least not on the basis of results of the Diagnostic Reading Tests—either that they do or that they do not increase comprehension.

Louis R. Ward

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

*To the Editors of "College English":*

Will you please take up the matter of the apostrophe for possessives and contractions to consider whether it might not be dropped entirely?

I can think of no use of the mark where its omission would result in obscure meaning or misunderstanding.

And I notice its misuse in public print on many occasions, even used for plurals.

Why can't we drop the use?

ETHEL M. PARKINSON

DECATUR, ILLINOIS

## *Current English Forum*

*Conducted by the NCTE COMMITTEE ON CURRENT ENGLISH USAGE<sup>1</sup>*

Q. I have heard well-educated speakers say both "Two times two are four" and "Two times two is four." Which is right?—M. A. H.

A. Both are right. Jespersen (*Essentials of English Grammar*, p. 218) says: "Usage wavers in arithmetical formulas: What *are* (or *is*) twice three? Six and six *is* (or *are*) twelve." Just as with collective nouns, the number in the speaker's mind may be now singular, now plural. (See *ibid.*, pp. 210-12. Note especially the reference at the top of p. 212 to new collectives such as cricket "elevens" and college "eights." Americans speak oftener of baseball "nines" and basketball "fives.") In all periods of English one may find instances of subject-verb agreement that depend on sense rather than on form. In MnE such instances are more numerous than in the past. But the older concept of agreement by form is still quite acceptable here, and nobody need be ashamed of either usage in arithmetical formulas.—A. C. B.

Q. I hear *funny* being given the meaning of "strange," "odd," "peculiar." Is this an accepted meaning?—P. R. C.

A. The meaning of "strange," "odd," "peculiar" for *funny* is very common in informal English. It is heard in everyday speech and is employed by people of every educational level. From a reading of nearly six thousand pages the word was found twenty-two times, the greatest number being in short stories. This meaning of the word was not employed at all in nonfiction works but was used in direct quotations,

thoughts of a character, or by the narrator when the story was told in the first person. The proportionate use of this meaning with that of "laughable" or "humorous" was about nine to one. In twenty-eight personal letters over a period of three months it was found in fourteen. It was heard during the same period in three films: *Farmer Takes a Wife*, a western, and *From Here to Eternity*. From this evidence it is clear that this meaning is employed in informal English but is not yet on the formal level.—M. M. B.

Q. Is it good usage to employ *towards* for *toward*?—B. C. D.

A. It is hard to say whether *toward* or *towards* is preferable. There is divided usage. Even the authorities disagree. *Webster's New International Dictionary* and Porter G. Perrin (*Writer's Guide and Index to English*, p. 765) give preference to *toward*, but *Funk and Wagnalls' New Standard Dictionary* cites *towards* as the more common form. All agree as to the identical meaning of the two words. The *O.E.D.* and *Webster's* give *towards* as the prevailing British usage. *Webster's* states that *toward* is the more common in the United States, except where the later development is employed for euphony. In three studies made covering nearly thirty-five hundred pages it was discovered that both are used. In one study from reading and listening the percentage was 62.7 to 37.3 in favor of *toward*. There were more instances of *toward* in the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine, but *towards* was found. On the other hand, the *Saturday Review* and *Case and Comment* (a professional magazine for lawyers) offer evidence to the contrary. In examples of sentences in which *toward* or *towards* could be inserted, fifty-four eighth-graders gave preference to *towards*. The percentage was 40.7 to 59.3. In the United

<sup>1</sup> Margaret M. Bryant, *chairman*, Harold B. Allen, Adeline C. Bartlett, Archibald A. Hill, Kemp Malone, James B. McMillan, Albert H. Marckwardt, Russell Thomas, John N. Winburne, Harlen M. Adams.

States one can find more instances of *toward*, but *towards* seems to be gaining ground and is employed by reputable writers.—M. M. B.

*Q.* Are *about* and *around* interchangeable?—L. S. G.

*A.* There are times when *about* and *around* are interchangeable: in a positional meaning, as outside, on every side, in a circle. For instance, one may say, "They gathered about him," or "They gathered around him." In the sense of approximation, one often hears "Around twenty persons attended" instead of "About twenty persons attended." This usage is found in informal English, but there is an apparent rise in the use of it. Thirty-five samples of these words employed in the sense of approximation have been gathered from written and spoken contexts. The written material, about five thousand pages, covered a wide range of magazines and a good sampling of books and authors. The percentage was 71 to 29 in favor of *about*, but instances of *around* were found in *Business Week*, the *New Yorker* ("around 1926" and "around a hundred thousand dollars more"), *New York Herald Tribune* ("... several [stock-market] leaders were down around a point"), *New York World Telegram* ("high [temperature] around 50"); *around* frequently appears in the weather reports and prognostications in newspapers. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt on a television interview said that she gets up every morning "around a quarter to eight"; Drew Pearson in the "Washington Merry-Go-Round" wrote that government support price of wheat last summer was "around \$2.20 a bushel" but that actually "many farmers got around \$1.60 or \$1.70 a bushel"; and *Time* magazine cites Governor Herman Talmadge of Georgia as saying, "The other evening four of us went to an Atlanta restaurant for dinner. . . . With the tip, it cost around \$5.50 each."

In addition, three seventh-year classes totaling one hundred pupils (a special progress class, an average class, and an above-average class) were asked to fill in the blank

in the following sentence with either *around* or *about*: "I will meet you — seven o'clock." The percentage was 70 to 30 in favor of *about*.

From the evidence cited one can see that the meaning of approximation for *around* in the sense of *about* is still not the preferred usage, but, if outstanding personages and well-known magazines continue to give it this meaning, it will soon be on an equal footing with *about*.—M. M. B.

*Q.* Do you think that *due to* introducing an adverbial phrase is good usage?—A. L. H.

*A.* Despite the objection of the purists and the condemnation of many handbooks, *due to* as a preposition has made its way. It is heard daily in speech on all levels and found in both formal and informal writing. As far back as 1930, Professor John S. Kenyon in *American Speech*, VI, 61-70, exhibited an extremely large number of quotations from current writers and showed that *due to* had shifted its function in the same way that its respected neighbor *owing to* had. The latter developed from a participle. *Due* was originally an adjective but has undoubtedly developed another function, as have many words. It has worked its way into literary circles. Such a writer as Galsworthy does not hesitate to employ it. In a recent study based on more than twenty-five hundred pages of books in different fields, such as government, biography, history, sociology, and psychology, in addition to weekly editions of the *TV Guide*, daily editions of a newspaper, monthly editions of the *Reader's Digest*, and an issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, it was discovered that *due to* was employed in 56 per cent of the cases, whereas *because of* can boast only 25 per cent and *owing to* 19 per cent. From the evidence piled up through the years it seems that *due to* has made its way despite all odds. If a person prefers *because of* or *owing to*, he may use one of these expressions, but he should not object to anyone else employing *due to* in such a sentence as "Due to operating difficulties, the program will be discontinued."—M. M. B.

## *Report and Summary*

### *NCTE Election Notice*

In accordance with the constitution of the National Council of Teachers of English, the Board of Directors at its meeting last Thanksgiving Day chose Paul Farmer, Harlen M. Adams, Helen F. Olson, Robert C. Pooley, and Blanche Trezevant as a Nominating Committee to propose officers for 1955. Through Paul Farmer, the chairman, the committee offers these nominations:

*For President:* JOHN C. GERBER, State University of Iowa

*For First Vice-President:* LUILLA B. COOK, Minneapolis Public Schools

*For Second Vice-President:* DAVID H. RUSSELL, University of California, Berkeley

*For Directors-at-Large:* JEROME W. ARCHER, Marquette University; WILLIAM D. BOUTWELL, Scholastic publications and Teachers College, Columbia University; BERNICE FREEMAN, Troup County, Georgia, Public Schools; HORTENSE L. HARRIS, Gloucester, Massachusetts, High School; FANNIE J. RAGLAND, Cincinnati Public Schools.

This slate will be presented for action at the meeting of the Board next November. Other nomination(s) may be made by petition(s) signed by twenty Directors of the Council and presented to the Secretary of the Council, with the written consent of the nominee(s), before August 16. When Mr. Farmer moves the election of the committee's nominees, other nominations may be made by members of the Board.

THE EDITORIAL OFFICES OF *College English* and the *English Journal*, by the time you receive this issue, will have been moved to their new location at 1849 West 107th Street, Chicago 43, Illinois. *All manuscripts should be sent to this address.*

The business office of the National Council of Teachers of English is now in its new home. Address: 704 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois.

THE THIRD ANNUAL PURDUE UNIVERSITY workshop in creative dramatics and play production will be held June 28-July 17 on the grounds of the Dunes Arts Foundation, Michigan City, Indiana. The Foundation's stock theater and children's workshops will be used as classroom laboratories. Three fully accredited graduate or under-

graduate course hours. Tuition: \$36 graduate; \$24 undergraduate. For further information address Dr. Ross D. Smith, Theater Director, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.

THE SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL READING Conference of the University of Chicago will be held June 29-July 2. For details write to Helen M. Robinson, Department of Education, who has succeeded William S. Gray as director of the Conference.

MORE THAN FOUR HUNDRED teachers attended the annual spring meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication held March 4-6 at the Hotel Jefferson, St. Louis. Full reports of panel discussions and workshops will be

printed in a forthcoming issue of the Conference *Bulletin*. The 1955 conference will be held in Chicago, at the Hotel Morrison, March 24-26. Program chairman is Irwin Griggs, Temple University, Philadelphia.

**THE ROLE OF THE PAPERBACK** books in reserve libraries and as stimulants of reading interest among students was discussed by one of the sections of the American Library Association at the midwinter meeting in Chicago. The group in attendance consisted mainly of members of the Association of College and Reference Libraries and representatives of paperback publishers.

Many of the librarians present spoke of using paperbacks for reserve distribution, and some reported these books to be surprisingly durable—up to twenty-eight check-outs being not uncommon. The paperbacks are so inexpensive that there is no problem in providing sufficient copies. The publishers' representatives present expressed an interest in receiving from college teachers suggestions concerning worth-while titles that should be added to their lists.

Librarians reported also the display and sale of paperbacks in bookstores supported by colleges and in college libraries. They expressed the belief that students' interest in reading may be stimulated by making readily available, at low cost, good pieces of literature. The librarian of Hamilton College reported that his students purchased an average of four or five such books annually. Another librarian reported on an open, unguarded display, run on the honor system. If a student wished a book, he was expected to drop the coins into a tin can. Only a small loss resulted.

**THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY** number of the British Broadcasting Corporation's *The Listener* is an 80-page illustrated issue containing the outstanding broadcasts of the last quarter-century. It presents a fascinating conspectus of the development of British radio, which will interest all teachers concerned with mass communications. Included are notable "air-

scripts" by Churchill, Shaw, Wells, Max Beerbohm, James Stephens, and Elizabeth Bowen. Address: B.B.C., 630 Fifth Avenue, New York. \$5.00 for fifty-two issues.

**ENCOUNTER (BRITISH)** IS A NEW INTERNATIONAL review of literature, art, and politics, published monthly, and edited by the poet Stephen Spender. Now four months old, it has already had among its contributors such noted writers as Arthur Koestler, Bertrand Russell, Albert Camus, Christopher Isherwood, W. H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, Theodore Roethke, and George Barker. Address: The Windmill Press, Kingswood, Surrey, England. \$5.00 a year.

"**ARE OUR TEACHERS AFRAID TO teach?**" Robert M. Hutchins asks in *Look* for March 9. He feels that they are afraid and also that fear is one reason 60,000 teachers leave the profession each year while we are already short 72,000. Hutchins points out that President Eisenhower has indorsed UNESCO and the UN, that Vice-President Nixon has pronounced against racial discrimination, that Chief Justice Warren has approved health insurance, and that Robert A. Taft said it was all right for Communists to teach if they did not attempt to indoctrinate; but that it may be very unsafe for a teacher to express any of these opinions. It is impossible to prepare young people to take their part in the world if they must not face issues—and all issues are controversial—in school. The teacher must not be expected to conceal his own convictions, but he must see that all sides of an issue are presented fairly and must leave each student to make his own decision. To teach only one side of an issue, even if it is the popular side, is undemocratic propagandizing. He tosses off many quotable sentences.

**THE "INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM ISSUE"** of the *ALA Bulletin* (November, 1953) is inspiring reading. The librarians not only believe in freedom of inquiry but boldly stand on that belief. This *Bulletin* has a lot of material of use to the teacher who finds himself likely to be attacked by critics who

do not recognize the Hitlerian-Stalinist tendency of their actions. Perhaps most valuable is "Intellectual Freedom: A Special Reading List for Our Time," but the "Statement of the American Bar Association on the Freedom To Read," "The President's Letter on Intellectual Freedom," "Library Bill of Rights" (1948), and "ALA Statement on Labeling" may also be live ammunition. There are, too, ringing statements by congressmen and an effective one by George F. Kennan, the man whom the Kremlin would not receive as ambassador from the United States because he was so outspoken in condemnation of Russian misgovernment.

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA University, will hold a Conference on the Language Arts in the Education of Children and Youth, July 5-9, just after the NEA convention in New York. There will be general meetings and also small groups concerned with specific problems. All departments of the Teachers College staff will be drawn upon for speakers and consultants. For information write to Dr. Francis Shoemaker at the College, 125 West 120th Street, New York 17.

IN "STAGE SPECTACLE AND VICTORIAN SOCIETY" (February *Quarterly Journal of Speech*) George R. Kernodle attempts to dispel the common impression that Victorian drama was hopelessly lost in spectacle for its own sake—big choruses, ballets, and crowds; battles, earthquakes, and fires. He gives a number of impressive examples to show that the mass scenes were necessary to make clear the relation of the protagonist to society, usually one of nonconformity.

A POETRY BOOK SOCIETY, SOMEWHAT comparable to our Book-of-the-Month Club, has recently been organized in Great Britain under the auspices of the Arts Council. Members pay about ten dollars a year in advance and receive four volumes of poetry and the Society's *Bulletin* containing ac-

counts of the books chosen, other poetry, announcements of poetry readings, etc. T. S. Eliot is one of the directors.

"THE CASE FOR LIGHT VERSE" IS delightfully presented by Morris Bishop in the March *Harper's*. Council members who heard another practitioner of the art, Richard Armour, at the Los Angeles meeting, will find that he and Bishop share the same enthusiasm for light verse as a helpful handmaiden to the appreciation of serious poetry. The three principal elements of light verse, Bishop demonstrates, are strictness of form, incongruity, and logic. He illustrates with excellent examples from Horace to Aldous Huxley.

SIMPLIFIED SPELLING OF THREE hundred words in all printing for executive departments of the government was ordered by President Theodore Roosevelt and extended by the Public Printer to all work done by the Government Printing Office. But the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court ruled that all quotations of laws had to be in their original spelling and ordered that attorneys' briefs use traditional spelling. Then Congress declared that the President had no power to change existing spellings and directed the Printer to return to his previous practice. However, 153 of the 300 words in Roosevelt's list were already the preferred forms in the Government Printing Office *Style Manual*. Today the *Manual*, which is based upon the practice and preferences of the government agencies, uses 143 of these. It drops *ue* in *catalog*, etc.; *a* or *o* in such words as *esthetic* and *encyclopedia*; but keeps the *ugh* in *though*, etc. It omits the middle *e* in *judgment* despite the rule "before a suffix beginning with a consonant"; but uses *fullness* and *install*. (Incidentally, the 1953 edition of the *Manual* is a good bargain; the abridged form in paper binding is only \$1.00. Order from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.)

## New Books

### College Teaching Materials

**TOWARD BETTER READING SKILL.** By *Russell Cosper and E. Glenn Griffin*. Appleton-Century-Crofts. Pp. 221. \$1.75. Thirty selections designed for college students in developmental reading. These vary in style and subject matter but are grouped so as to represent generally three levels of difficulty: Level 1, the easiest (five selections); Level 2, the middle group (fifteen selections); and Level 3, the most difficult (six selections). The last four selections (Level 2) are presented as progress texts. All are from one to two thousand words in length, followed by questions to test comprehension and vocabulary and to promote discussion. May be used for intensive courses in the teaching of reading or as a reading text in the standard composition and communication course. Format is that of a workbook, paperboard covers and perforated pages. Well printed on good paper.

**KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING.** By *Stewart Harral*. University of Oklahoma Press. Pp. 223. \$3.75. A guidebook and manual for both the veteran reporter and the beginning student in journalism. The author, director of public relations studies and professor of journalism at the University of Oklahoma, presents a collection of tested techniques. The style is informal, the illustrative material lively. The material which concerns "how to listen" is as interesting as that on how to ask questions.

**ENGLISH LITERATURE: A PERIOD ANTHOLOGY.** Edited by *Albert C. Waugh and George William McClelland*. Appleton-Century-Crofts. Pp. 1480. \$6.75. The periods in English literature as they are here divided are: "Old English," "Middle English," "Sixteenth Century," "Seventeenth Century," "Eighteenth Century," "The Romantic Movement," "The Victorian Age," and "The Contemporary Period." Each period is introduced by a general introduction written by a specialist. The stress is on the major works of major writers, and the text, wherever possible, is given in full. Novels are excluded, but five complete plays are included, one for each period from the sixteenth century on. Special care has been taken not to slight the

section devoted to contemporary literature. Textual notes are full, but there are no distracting numbers in the text. Readable biographies of more than a hundred and fifty authors are also provided. 125 illustrations; 10 maps.

**READING THE SHORT STORY.** By *Harry Shaw and Douglas Bement*. 2d ed. Harper. Pp. 396. A collection of twenty-five excellent short stories with a helpful introduction and study questions. Six of the stories are new to this edition. The notes on authors and stories and the questions for discussion have been revised.

**SPEECH COMPOSITION.** By *William Norwood Brigance*. 2d ed. Appleton-Century-Crofts. Pp. 385. \$3.00. The informal style and basic principles of this well-known text remain unchanged, but the illustrative material has been carefully revised to make it more interesting to present-day students.

**THE VICTORIAN AGE: PROSE, POETRY, AND DRAMA.** Edited with *Introductions, Bibliographies, and Notes* by *John Wilson Bowyer and John Lee Brooks*. 2d ed. Appleton-Century-Crofts. Pp. 1188. \$6.50. An anthology of Victorian literature containing representative writings of some fifty authors. The selections given in this volume are unchanged from those of the 1938 edition. Minor revisions have been made in the biographies. The main changes are in the bibliographies and textual notes, which take up 160 pages and have been completely reworked.

**INTERPRETATIVE READING.** By *Sara Lowrey and Gertrude E. Johnson*. Rev. ed. Appleton-Century-Crofts. Pp. 595. \$3.75. The authors sincerely believe that, although literature may be studied in many ways, no method is superior to that of oral interpretation. The first half of the book deals with techniques, including chapters on choral reading and reading for radio; the last half, with selections, both prose and poetry. An appendix includes a "Syllabus for a College Course in Interpretative Reading" and a bibliography for supplementary study.

**ELIZABETHAN LYRICS: A CRITICAL ANTHOLOGY.** Edited by Kenneth Muir. Pp. 219. **ENGLISH PASTORAL POETRY: FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO MARVELL.** Edited by Frank Kermode. Pp. 256. Barnes & Noble. \$2.50 each. Two volumes in the "Life, Literature, and Thought Library," a series designed to illustrate some of the chief developments in English civilization since the Middle Ages. The first volume contains a representative selection of lyrics (unannotated), and in his Introduction Muir discusses why their art is more important than their presumed spontaneity and what constitutes poetic sincerity. Kermode's lively Introduction is intended to dispel reader allergy to nymphs and shepherds. It should. Translations from classical and foreign poetry are included.

**SWIFT ON HIS AGE: SELECT PROSE AND VERSE.** Edited by Colin J. Horne. Barnes & Noble. Pp. 283. \$2.50. The purpose of this volume is to exhibit Swift in the setting of the Augustan age. *Gulliver's Travels*, *A Tale of a Tub*, and *The Battle of the Books* are omitted. Selections are from his less well-known writings and include considerable verse. A new volume in the "Life, Literature, and Thought Library."

**AN INTRODUCTION TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DRAMA, 1700-1780.** By Frederick S. Boas. Oxford University Press. Pp. 365. The author's previous volumes introducing Tudor and Stuart drama are well known. Like those, this volume is designed for students who are not specialists and for the general reader and playgoer. Representative playwrights are stressed, and critical analyses of their plays included.

**WORLD LITERATURE, Vol. I: GREEK, ROMAN, ORIENTAL AND MEDIEVAL**

**CLASSICS.** By Buckner B. Trawick. Barnes & Noble. Pp. 280. \$1.50. A new volume in the "College Outline Series," intended to be used as a handbook to supplement anthologies of world literature.

**HOW TO WRITE REPORTS.** By Calvin D. Linton. Harper. Pp. 240. \$2.25. A practical text designed to teach the general principles and special techniques of writing good expository reports. Refresher chapters on grammar and punctuation included. The author has been conducting large classes in report-writing in various government departments and for the Army. This text was prepared at the request of Army intelligence officers. Simple and fundamental enough to be used in freshman classes, at least for reference.

**THE BEGINNING WRITER.** By Alan Swallow. Johnson Publishing Co. (Boulder, Colo.). Pp. 67. Cloth, \$2.00; paperback, \$1.25. Questions and answers which appeared originally in a column "Advising Beginners" in *Author and Journalist*. Chiefly helpful on marketing.

### Workbooks

**INTEGRATED FRESHMAN ENGLISH.** By Joseph A. Rogers. Rev. ed. Rinehart. Pp. 235. \$2.00. Text and exercises are organized around "the paragraph," and all exercise sentences have to do in content with a single concept, the core elements of Western culture.

**PRACTICAL PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS.** By Charles Chandler Parkhurst. Prentice-Hall. Pp. 175. \$1.44. Exercises stress the mechanics of English as they relate to business letters, etc.

### Professional

**THE CHANGING HUMANITIES: AN APPRAISAL OF OLD VALUES AND NEW USES.** By David H. Stevens. Harper. \$3.50. This is an excellent, authoritative guide to the present state and many problems of the humanities in the United States in both teaching and research. Mr. Stevens, the former director of the humanities for the Rockefeller Foundation, surveys the situation with the shrewd eye of the expert appraiser of many projects, with the

warm heart of the teacher of English, and with the gentle wisdom he is noted for. He notes that "all humanistic teaching and research must be international," but his first task is to clarify the American tradition. He is now writing another, briefer study of the humanities in Great Britain and Canada.

The American tradition in the humanities has emerged only during the past half-century. To be sure, the American Philosophical Society was

founded in 1743, almost exactly two centuries before the American Society for Aesthetics (1942), the latest of the twenty-four members of the American Council of Learned Societies (1919) which Mr. Stevens lists in an appendix. But the first formal pattern of humanistic studies to appear was set up in the Johns Hopkins University in 1878, with German as the one common requirement, because nearly all fifty-three members of the faculty had studied in Germany. By 1900, Mr. Stevens finds, a national ideal for American colleges and universities had emerged, and from the divisional grouping into natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities about 1930 came a greater coherence among humanistic studies, and from facing common tasks a growing unity of spirit embodied in the free search for truth and an inner strength derived from individual insights into the nature of man. A balance of studies emerged based on linguistic knowledge: the languages, the histories, the philosophies, the literatures. After 1933, with the rapid extension of research and teaching into cultural areas hitherto neglected by the humanist and cultivated only by the anthropologist, the efficacy of this quadrivium was put to the test. Now a new balance of studies is due. A place must be formed among the humanities for the arts, music, and the drama, despite their heavy requirements of time for practice and theory as well as for the history of each subject. The over-all result of Mr. Stevens' appraisal is that the humanities in the United States are equal to the rapidly increasing responsibilities thrust upon them, provided they get the understanding and support they need. It is obvious that it is in the interest of every teacher of English to bring Mr. Stevens' message about the humanities to the general reader.

ERNEST HASSOLD

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

CENSORSHIP AND CONTROVERSY: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CENSORSHIP OF TEACHING MATERIALS FOR CLASSROOM AND LIBRARY. National Council of Teachers of English. Pp. 56. \$0.75.

In agreement with the action of several other educational organizations, the National Council of Teachers of English has issued a formal, public statement "against dangers now threatening the important work for which its members are responsible in the classrooms of the nation." They refer of course to numerous attempts

around the country to remove certain books from school libraries and certain texts from classrooms, to exclude certain speakers from campuses, and prevent the teaching of "currently controversial topics." The *Report* discriminates "between the responsible and the irresponsible criticisms" and suggests "procedures for keeping the criticism at an intelligent and constructive level." The Committee alerts school authorities "against those persons who use the fear of Communism as a pretext for vicious attacks upon the American educational system."

It also makes a very good point when it states that "the responsibility of teachers, then, lies as much in treatment as in selection of materials"; for "often prejudicial material can be turned into an opportunity to teach fairness." The pamphlet shows, too, what roles teachers, students, school authorities, parents, and community leaders can play when problems of censorship and controversy arise.

Appended to the *Report* are statements from other organizations like the NEA, National Council of the Social Studies, etc., and from immemorial utterances on freedom by great figures like Sophocles, Milton, Washington, and Mill. There is an excellent list of recent magazine articles dealing with censorship and with attacks on public education. The pamphlet might profitably serve as a "Bible" for administrators, a basis for faculty meetings, and as a program for a local P.T.A. One note of skepticism: one wonders what chance such official pronouncements with their necessarily limited edition have in the face of biased columnists that reach hundreds of thousands of people, and radio commentators who talk to millions. But then a slingshot did once slay a giant.

GEORGE H. HENRY

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

UNDERSTANDING GRAMMAR. By Paul Roberts. Harper. Pp. 550. \$5.00. The author knows the work of present scholars but feels that the Fries analysis by form is not yet ready for classroom use. He uses the conventional categories, with recognition of divided usage and its causes and without pretense that definitions are airtight. His organization is by parts of speech, definition of "subject" coming in the middle of the book. He gives eighty pages of sentences for discussion of usage and applied grammar. One of the best guides for teachers whose students have the usual composition texts.

**THE ART AND SCIENCE OF STAGE MANAGEMENT.** By Peter Goffin. Philosophical Library. Pp. 120. \$3.75. The author, an Englishman, writes simply and clearly with the authority of a master practitioner. He has been designer for the famous Westminster Theatre, is now both technical adviser for the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and examiner for the Ministry of Education in Design for the Theatre. This brief critical study of the aesthetic and technical aspects of the interpretative process which translates the written word into action and speech will be invaluable to student designers as well as to professional and amateur producers.

**AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIP IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.** Edited by Merle Curti. Harvard University Press. \$4.50. This book as a whole is for workers in research, but it should be in college libraries for the reading of individual chapters by teachers in the various departments. "Literary Scholarship" is treated by René Wellek. He first examines the trends resulting from the influence of German scholarship, romanticism, the New Humanists, and the New Critics. Then he describes in more detail the work actually done.

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF SHAKESPEARE.** By K. J. Spaulding. Philosophical Library. \$3.75. The analyst finds Shakespeare first studying men morally sick and the efforts of others to

help; then showing men rising or falling, the effect of fate (blind chance) upon men; and finally reaching a personal solution of the problem of evil in the world. All this depends upon the accepted sequence of the plays.

**TELEVISION IN SCHOOL, COLLEGE, AND COMMUNITY.** By Jennie Waugh Callahan. McGraw-Hill. Pp. 339. \$4.75. Part I (65 pages) discusses "Establishing an Educational-Television Station"; Part II (114 pages), "Programming for Educational Television"; and Part III (100 pages) gives scripts from community stations, from college and university, and from public schools.

**EACH ONE TEACH ONE: FRANK LAUBACH, FRIEND TO MILLIONS.** By Marjorie Medary. Longmans. \$3.00. The story of the sociologically trained missionary who has led literacy campaigns through which sixty million people in the backward nations have learned to read. Now they need more good matter in their own tongues to read.

### Pamphlets

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC STYLE MANUALS: A GUIDE TO THEIR USE IN DOCUMENTATION AND RESEARCH.** By Mary R. Kinney. ("A.C.R.L. Monographs," No. 8.) Association of College and Reference Libraries, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago. \$0.60.

### Nonfiction

**THOMAS WOLFE AT WASHINGTON SQUARE.** By Thomas Clark Pollock and Oscar Cargill. **THE CORRESPONDENCE OF THOMAS WOLFE AND HOMER ANDREW WATT.** Edited by Oscar Cargill and Thomas Clark Pollock. New York University Press. \$7.50 and \$2.50, or \$10.00 boxed together. These two thin and beautifully printed volumes, a thought-provoking contrast to the spine-bursting novels which they annotate, are the pious but not always loving tribute of Washington Square College to its severest critic. The proceeds are to go to a scholarship fund. Those readers who can either take Wolfe or leave him will find the minutiae of his academic connection both funny and depressing.

Half of the thicker volume is an essay by Professor Cargill which assembles the facts and the printable gossip (the Preface acknowledges

advice from two firms of lawyers) in 63 pages of text and 18 of notes. The style is occasionally a trifle labored, as when (p. 8) Robert Dow is said to have "joined Wallace and Wolfe on some of their prowls, becoming better acquainted with the latter and once doing a peripatetic stint of thirty-four blocks with him." One might also question the inclusion of such material as Wolfe's complete dossier from the Harvard Appointment Bureau (pp. 15-17), with its ambiguous recommendations. George P. Baker of 47 Workshop fame is betrayed, for example, as having remarked that "whether he [Wolfe] will be a successful playwright some day depends, I think, entirely on himself." Nevertheless, the essay is entertaining and enlightening, especially in relation to certain sections in *Of Time and the River*. The volume is filled out with memories of students and colleagues of Wolfe's,

among them Vardis Fisher and Henry T. Volkening, whose essays have previously appeared in periodical form.

In the thinner book the strain of the relationship of employer and employee brings out the worst in both Wolfe and Homer A. Watt. The would-be author, blowing hot and cold about a stop-gap job, is painfully chatty and conciliatory, while the harassed departmental chairman, worried about budgets and schedules and staff, vacillates between clichés and heavy-handed playfulness (as when he remarks of his instructor's ability to land on his feet that "you are more like a Thomas cat than a Thomas Wolfe").

THEODORE HORNBERGER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**THE ARTIFICIAL BASTARD: A BIOGRAPHY OF RICHARD SAVAGE.** By Clarence Tracy. Harvard University Press. Pp. 164. \$4.50. A brilliantly written biography of a flamboyant denizen of eighteenth-century Grub Street. Savage was the friend of Samuel Johnson (who wrote the first biography of him), a protégé of Pope, and the acquaintance of numerous other famous people. He seems to have been fascinating but weak and unscrupulous. He wrote some second-rate poetry and a play or two, but it was the romantic legend of his birth linking him with a famous society scandal, and upon which he played for the sake of notoriety, which intrigued his contemporaries.

**GEORGE GISSING, GRAVE COMEDIAN.** By Mabel Collins Donnelly. Harvard University Press. Pp. 245. \$4.50. Fifty years have passed since Gissing's death, sufficient time to make possible an objective evaluation of a writer who must have been sadly disagreeable as a person and who as a man of letters was certainly pessimistic and provocative. Dr. Donnelly's reflective and competent critical biography shows him as a rebel against Victorian prudery, a vigorous exponent of naturalism in fiction, and a keen critic. More than that, she has given us a valuable study of the intellectual development of a novelist who valued his craft.

**THE MIND ALIVE.** By Harry and Bonaro Overstreet. Norton. \$3.75. "How to keep our mental and emotional level high; how to live so that life has meaning." We can, the Overstreets believe, overcome obstacles which cause anxiety, tensions, and frustrations. Of special importance is *tenderness* if growth is to take place.

They believe, in spite of the fears of the present age, that a great many people *want* to understand and handle life better.

**BUT WE WERE BORN FREE.** By Elmer Davis. Bobbs-Merrill. \$2.75. Davis believes that freedom can be retained only by the eternal vigilance which has always been its price. He discusses the Bricker Amendment, the threat of the Communists, and the many evils of the present. "We shall go down unless we recognize what we have to fight for and have courage to fight for it." 229 pages.

**THE TANGLED FIRE OF WILLIAM FAULKNER.** By William Van O'Connor. University of Minnesota Press. \$4.00. O'Connor divides Faulkner's work into three periods. In the first (*Soldiers' Pay to These Thirteen*) there is much kinship with, perhaps imitation of, nineteenth-century writers; seemingly a bit arty. The second, longer period, from *The Sound and the Fury* to *Wild Palms*, including the majority of his best-known works, is characterized by violence, "exacerbated humor," and "grim dignity." In it, too, there is constant experimentation with methods of narration, including the long sentences and use of details whose significance does not appear until the end. The third period, from *Go Down Moses* to the most recent *Requiem for a Nun*, shows more hopefulness and deals more with political (social?) programs. Faulkner, in spite of incomplete education and little book knowledge of history, is "far and away, the best American novelist of the first half of the twentieth century." A footnote calls attention to the quarterly *Faulkner Studies*, now two years old, whose address is Box 102, University Station, Minneapolis.

**CONRAD'S MEASURE OF A MAN.** By Paul L. Wiley. University of Wisconsin Press. \$3.85. This chronological examination of Conrad's works emphasizes the psychological intent of the novelist. His strenuous effort to use images to present his characters' thoughts and feelings led readers for a long time into preoccupation with the images—the means. Wiley's main heads are "The Hermit: Man in the World," "The Incendiary: Man in Society," and "The Knight: Man in Eden." He uses as his "conclusion" the somewhat autobiographic *The Shadow Line*, which again expresses Conrad's conviction that the individual must support, and be supported by, the moral tradition.

**THE LANGUAGES OF CRITICISM AND THE STRUCTURE OF POETRY.** By R. S. Crane. University of Toronto Press. \$5.50. The modern study of the functions of symbols has shown that our thinking is conditioned by the language in which it goes on. So Crane points out that the thinking of critics is shaped by the terms they use. He then discusses "Poetic Structure in the Language of Aristotle," "The Languages of Contemporary Criticism," "Conceptions of Poetic Structure in Contemporary Criticism," and "Toward a More Adequate Criticism of Poetic Structure." By "poetry" Crane means "the whole range of artistic creation in words."

**THE DICTIONARY OF ACCEPTED IDEAS.** By Gustave Flaubert. "Translated" with an Introduction by Jacques Barzun. New Directions. Pp. 86. \$2.00. Flaubert had collected over many years clichés and trite ideas—many, but not all of them, sound—with the intention of publishing them as safe satire upon people "whose mode of feeling is low." His notes were found in the papers he left, and published as a supplement to *Bouvard and Pecuchet*. French-American Barzun has rendered these freely into our equivalents.

**THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF QUOTATIONS.** 2d ed. Oxford University Press. Pp. 1003. \$8.50. This differs from American quotation books such as Morley's Bartlett or Stevenson's not only in its greater proportion of British authors; it also seems to have more quotations from other literatures, those from Greek, Latin, and French in the original languages as well as in translation; and the Index gives not only page numbers but also item numbers. Familiarity rather than merit is cited as the basis of selection.

**CANADIAN WRITERS.** By Arthur L. Phelps. McClelland & Stewart (Toronto). Pp. 119. Text ed. (paper), \$1.25. Chatty, short "talks" (radio?) on the lives and writings of E. J. Pratt, Morley Callahan, R. W. Service, Stephen Leacock, and about a dozen others less known to us. Well done.

**PENN STATE YANKEE: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRED LEWIS PATTEE.** Pennsylvania State College. Pp. 384. \$4.75. The first professor of *American* literature left this manuscript to his college. W. L. Werner has edited, and the College has published, it in an unusually pleasant format. The content is far

from dull: New England hill boyhood, college study at Dartmouth, and varied experiences as a pioneer teacher. The narrative is competent and engagingly frank.

**THE MODERN WRITER AND HIS WORLD.** By G. S. Fraser. Verschoyle (London; obtainable from the British Book Centre, New York). Pp. 351. \$3.50. An account of the main developments in English fiction, drama, poetry, and criticism since the 1890's by a Scottish poet, critic, and teacher. It will make clear the pathway for many American and English readers who, for example, find modern poetry puzzling. "It is the plain man and his needs that I have chiefly thought of here" writes Fraser in his Preface, and then adds disarmingly, "I am, like most of my readers, in most things a plain man myself." However, he writes with a distinction and perception that a plain man rarely commands. The result is a lucid, highly readable, descriptive analysis of the new movements in literature which teachers and students of English literature will find invaluable.

#### *Paper Bound*

**TEACHER IN AMERICA.** By Jacques Barzun. ("Anchor Books.") Doubleday. \$0.85.

**SACRED BOOKS OF THE WORLD.** Edited by A. C. Bouquet. Penguin. \$0.85.

**PLATO: THE LAST DAYS OF SOCRATES.** Translated by Hugh Tredennick. Penguin. \$0.50.

**BYZANTINE ART.** By D. Talbot Rice. Penguin. \$0.85.

**CHARLES CHURCHILL: POET, RAKE, AND REBEL.** By Wallace Cable Brown. University of Kansas. Pp. 240. \$4.00. The exploits of the lively and celebrated Mr. Churchill provide entertaining material for his biographer, who has portrayed him in the setting indigenous to him, the fashionable London life of the mid-eighteenth century. But Churchill was not merely a wit and a rake. He was a poet of extraordinary intellectual vigor whose work (*the Rosciad* is his best-known poem) Professor Brown has ably evaluated in relation to the development of English satire.

**SAMLA STUDIES IN MILTON.** Edited by J. Max Patrick. University of Florida Press. Pp. 197. \$3.50. Paper. An extremely interesting

and stimulating collection of eight essays on Milton and his works by members of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, with a foreword by James Holly Hanford. The titles include: "Milton's Views on Universal and Civil Decay," by Joseph Allen Bryant, Jr.; "The Substance of Milton's Angels," by Robert H. West; "Milton's Defense of Bawdry," by Allan H. Gilbert; "The Accent on Youth, in *Comus*," by Robert H. Bowers; "Shakespeare and Milton, Once More," by Alwin Thayer; "Lycidas and the Marinell Story," by Thomas B. Stroup; "The Language of Book VI," by Lalia Phipps Boone; and "Milton's Blank Verse and the Chronology of His Major Poems," by Ants Oras.

**WORDS AND SOUNDS IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH.** By John Orr. Basil Blackwell (Oxford). Pp. 279. \$4.25. A collection of twenty-four linguistic studies, most of which have appeared previously in periodical publications. Some are in English, others in French. They range from "The Impact of French upon English" to "Linguistic Geography as a Corrective to Etymology" and "Phoneme and Morpheme."

**LOGIC AND LANGUAGE: SECOND SERIES.** Edited by A. G. N. Flew. Philosophical Library. Pp. 242. \$4.75. Twelve essays by as many British authors, all of which have appeared previously in periodical publications. They range in subject from "Language Strata" to "Mathematics and the World."

**THE DISINHERITED MIND: ESSAYS IN MODERN GERMAN LITERATURE AND THOUGHT.** By Erich Heller. Dufour & Saifer. \$4.00. Eight essays previously published in the *Cambridge Journal*, including studies of Goethe, Nietzsche, Rilke, Spengler, Kafka, and Karl Kraus. All are intimately connected with the

relation between thought and poetry. A valuable and rewarding volume.

**ON THE FOUR QUARTETS OF T. S. ELIOT.** *Anonymous. With a Foreword by Roy Campbell.* British Book Centre. Pp. 64. \$2.50. In his Introduction the author says that he is not a professional writer or critic and that his essay is meant to be not literary or critical but merely an interpretation, "a guide to the inner meaning of an incomparable poem intended to encourage other readers to undertake the exploration for themselves." Clear, fresh, and stimulating.

**COLERIDGE.** By *Humphry House.* (The Clark Lectures, 1951-52.) British Book Centre. Pp. 167. \$2.00. The first part deals with Coleridge as a unique personality and a greater writer, the central portion with his poems, and the last chapter relates the earlier parts of the book to his criticism. "Frost at Midnight," "The Ancient Mariner," and "Kubla Khan" are discussed at length.

**WORDSWORTH'S PRELUDE: A STUDY OF ITS LITERARY FORM.** By Abbie Findlay Potts. Cornell University Press. Pp. 392. \$6.00. A very detailed study of the poem, section by section, which will be extremely useful to all teachers and students of Wordsworth.

**THE SATYRICON OF PETRONIUS.** *Translated and with an Introduction by Paul Dinnage.* British Book Centre. Pp. 162. \$2.95. Petronius was the "arbiter of pleasure" of the corrupt emperor Nero in the first century. His *Satyricon*, an ebullient prose satire interspersed with poetry which exists only in a fragmentary version, provides a bawdy, contemporary account of Roman decadence. A new, complete, unabridged translation into English.

### Fiction, Poetry, Drama

**THE CASTLE.** By Franz Kafka. Definitive ed. Knopf. \$4.50. *The Castle* was uncompleted when Kafka died, but he left notes and had told friends his plans for final chapters. Surveyor K. appeared at a snowbound village bound for the Castle, a short distance away. Indefinitely he stayed at the village, making desperate efforts to have the Castle confirm his appointment.

Frustration wore him out. Fantasy, symbolism, satire, bitter humor. A nine-page homage by Thomas Mann.

**BOUVARD AND PECUCHET.** By Gustave Flaubert. *Introduction by Lionel Trilling.* New Directions. \$3.75. The novel was unfinished and unrevised when Flaubert died. Homas, a former

character, appears, but the ironic comedy is concerned with two retired clerks whose names appear in the title. They are each forty-seven years old when they meet and become fast friends. One inherits a comfortable income, and the other had a small sum. They retire and devote themselves to self-education—at forty-seven.

RIVERSIDE POETRY 1953. Edited by W. H. Auden, Marianne Moore, and Karl Shapiro. \$1.50 (paper). An anthology of forty new poems selected from entries in the contest for college students sponsored by the Riverside Church.

GREAT ENGLISH SHORT NOVELS. Edited, with an Introduction, by Cyril Connolly. Dial. In three parts: "The Simplest Forms," "The Expanding Psyche," "The Limits of Form." Included are a biography, an imaginary biography, an adventure story, three types of the psychological thriller, an allegory, an analytical love story, and a comedy of manners. Samuel Johnson, Maria Edgeworth, George Eliot, Joseph Conrad, Aldous Huxley, Thomas Love Peacock, Virginia Woolf, and others are represented. A book for the library.

PRIZE STORIES 1954: THE O. HENRY AWARDS. Edited by Paul Engle and Hansford Martin. Doubleday. \$3.95. Thirty-fourth volume of the O. Henry prize stories. The prize-winners are Thomas Mobrey, Clay Putnam, and Richard Wilbur. In the Introduction the editors state their conviction that "the only thing a short story *should be* is a brief fictional narrative that achieves an aesthetic effect of emotional depth which, at first glance, would seem to be out of proportion to the apparently simple scope of the work." They speak also of the youth of the writers, the subject matter and background. The discussion of the prize story is informative. Twenty-three stories, five by women; fourteen by teachers, present or past.

TWENTY-FIVE MODERN PLAYS. Edited by S. Marion Tucker. Revised by Alan S. Downer. Harper. Pp. 1007. \$6.00. The important change in this third edition is the inclusion of *Murder in the Cathedral*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *The Death of a Salesman*. The collection as a whole emphasizes Continental plays rather than English or American.

RICHARD III. Edited by John Dover Wilson. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 280. \$2.75. Scholars will find this edition of the play particularly interesting because Wilson found the Folio version much corrupted and has considerably emended the text on the basis of variant findings. The most important of these he has noted in a special section. The volume also includes an introduction, detailed stage history, about one hundred pages of notes, and a glossary. The latest handy-sized volume in "The New Shakespeare" series.

ANTON CHEKHOV: THE SEA GULL AND OTHER PLAYS. A new translation by Elisaveta Fen. Penguin Classics. Pp. 207. \$0.50. Paper. Includes, besides *The Sea Gull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Bear*, *The Proposal*, and *A Jubilee*.

HUNGERFIELD AND OTHER POEMS. By Robinson Jeffers. Random House. Pp. 115. \$3.00. The first page and the last—and not these only—lament the loss of the aging poet's wife. In "Hungerfield" and the sixty-page play of "The Cretan Woman" (adapted from Euripides) there is the usual Jeffers violence. The shorter pieces are not misanthropic but see men as inconsequential inhabitants of a minute part of the universe and America as doomed to sink like Athens and Rome. Beautiful landscape and buildings are effectively evoked.

### Paper Bound

THE COUNTRY OF THE POINTED FIRS AND OTHER STORIES. By Sarah Orne Jewett. Preface by Willa Cather. ("Anchor Books.") Doubleday. \$0.85.

THE SEA OF GRASS. By Conrad Richter. Bantam. \$0.25.

THE SEAGULL AND OTHER PLAYS. By Anton Chekhov. Translated by Elisaveta Fen. Penguin. \$0.50.

KEATS: SELECTED POEMS. Edited by J. E. Morpurgo. Penguin. \$0.65.

MOLIÈRE: FIVE PLAYS. Translated by John Wood. Penguin. \$0.65. "The Would-Be Gentleman," "That Scoundrel Scapin," "The Miser," "Love's the Best Doctor," and "Don Juan."

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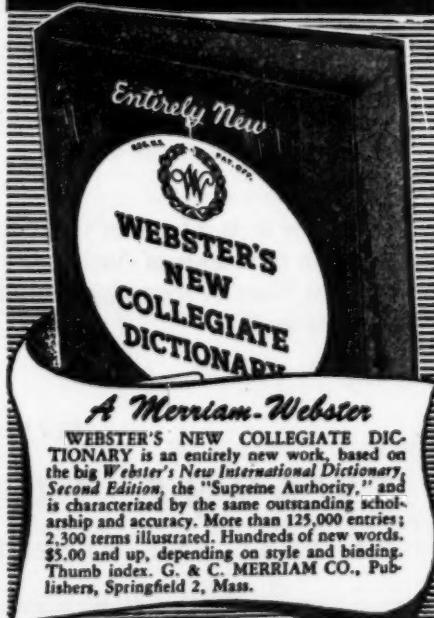
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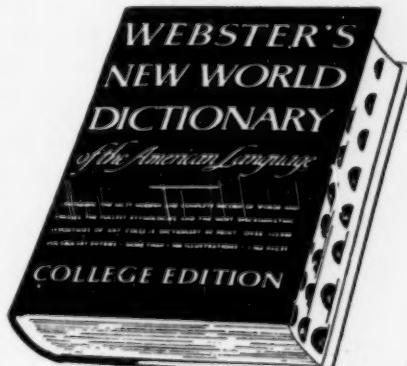


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